

## IUA Review [10/3] for IUA Meetings in Dublin City University on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2010

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### **1. Research**

#### **1.1. Research Policy and Funding Overview**

The cuts in R&D across the various government departments has meant a 7% reduction on the overall funding available for the SSTI in 2010 compared to last year. Uncertainty remains over the fate of PRTLTI and other DES/HEA research activity. It is notable that the HERG has not met since January due to this lack of certainty. The reduced budget will mainly affect the number of new awards that research agencies. The main effects of the cuts to date are:

#### **National Funding**

1. Loss of essential expertise in leading research groups as continuation funding for successful programmes is no longer available. Scientific research is not a stop-start activity and it is not possible to pause and then pick up again where you have left off. Job losses of 25% of non-tenured research staff are expected.
2. Loss to Ireland of internationally-mobile researchers who now perceive that the opportunities for carrying out internationally-competitive research in Ireland have significantly diminished. This will test the effectiveness of SFI in embedding these researchers in Ireland.
3. The constriction in new basic research awards at the expense of industry oriented and applied research awards. This is extremely short-sighted as the pipeline of new companies being spun out of the universities depends critically on funding for basic research.
4. PhD training is severely cut back and numbers of PhD students supported will fall by circa 50%.
5. Cuts to the Enterprise Ireland commercialisation fund essentially mean that there is no funding available for the first stages of turning research results into commercial propositions (proof of concept, technology development). The pipeline for new companies is strangled at the early stages.
6. It is ironic that the 2010 AD Little report for Forfas finds that enormous strides have been made in Technology Transfer and Commercialisation in Ireland. This progress is at risk in two ways: (i) uncertainty in the continued availability of adequate funding under the technology transfer strengthening initiative (TTSi) leading to the possibility of staff losses which will reduce the considerable expertise built up; (ii) staff losses due to morale problems as the role is seen to be undervalued.
7. PRTLTI matching funds from non-exchequer sources are at risk because of delay in that programme.

8. New industry partners are being turned away from SFI CSET and SRC participation because reduction in core exchequer funding means a slimming down of existing programmes.

### **International Funding**

9. The Wellcome Trust is now reviewing the eligibility status of Ireland for its funding with a decision due in the Autumn. Already they have excluded Irish researchers from a number of schemes and it is clear that they have effectively already taken a decision.

10. The European Framework Seven Programme is a real source of research funding where the budget has **not been** cut. There is no doubt that there have been major increases in access to this competitive fund by the universities. However it must be strongly kept in mind that this fund is targeted at addressing EU wide issues and usually requires a large number of partners from across Europe. The EU research funds will not build basic capacity in Ireland nor support our interaction with industry. The share of EU R&D funding in Ireland dropped from 24% in the late nineties to 7% as would be typical of a mature research environment across Europe. It will rise due to increased demand but again it must be emphasized that this supports collaborative additional research and does not address core infrastructure and researcher funding.

## **1.2. Researcher Careers**

### **1.2.1. Revised IUA Researcher Salary Scale**

The revised IUA Researcher Salary Scale guidelines have been in place since April. To date they are being applied to all new funding applications and have not given rise to any major issues. There is however an issue concerning pension contributions as the agreement to have this taken over by the public purse has not yet been finalised. There is still the necessity for universities to request pension contributions from non exchequer funded sources. This is creating difficulties in the case of co-funded public / private programmes including the Enterprise Ireland Innovation Partnerships.

### **1.2.2. Pay Cuts and the FP7 Marie Curie Programme**

The pay cuts in the public service have been applied to contract researchers working in the public HE sector. This also applies to those on non-exchequer funds. IUA is in direct consultation with the Department of Finance with a view to have this reversed, particularly for Marie Curie funded researchers. The European Commission is crystal clear on this issue; pay cuts are not acceptable and breach the terms of the contract. The IUA has submitted a request for exemption in this case but has not yet received a reply from the Department of Finance.

### **1.3. Fourth Level Ireland Network Group**

#### **1.3.1. HETAC Research Degree Programme Policy and Criteria**

On 29 March the Dr Honor Fagan (NUIM), Dr Westley Forsythe (IUA) and Prof. Gary Murphy (DCU) met Drs Brian Maguire and Peter Cullen of HETAC to discuss HETAC's draft Research Degree Programme Policy and Criteria.

Following a brief contextualisation of HETAC's draft policy paper by Peter Cullen, Dr Fagan and Prof Murphy outlined the Deans of Graduate Studies' concerns with the draft policy. HETAC effectively acknowledge the validity of all points concerning the examination and assessment process. Much of the ambiguity is the result of the fact that while HETAC are the awarding body, where they have not devolved 'delegated authority', the institute of technology is responsible for the assessment procedures. Notwithstanding this they acknowledge that a more explicit referencing to the IUQB guidelines would be useful in addition to clarification of the Chairperson's role and issues concerning conflicts of interest.

Concerning the more substantive issues of assessment criteria, HETAC are obliged by the terms of the 1999 Qualifications Act 'to determine standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners'. However they were quite explicit that the award could not be made unless the thesis evidenced 'the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy review by peers'. HETAC declared that the other 'standards of knowledge, skill or competence' outlined in the National Framework of Qualifications level ten descriptors 'could be induced' by virtue of successful completion of a PhD thesis, which is the basis for the award. HETAC have agreed to attempt making this more explicit, with reference to the agreed IUA structured PhD statement and relevant section (page 47) of the IUQB guidelines.

#### **1.3.2. PhD Stipends and Taxation**

It has come to the Deans of Graduate Studies attention that the IRCHSS allows scholarship holders to hold additional scholarships to a value of €16,000. This approach was taken to allow those holding an IRCHSS scholarship to also avail of the higher education grant. However, universities are concerned that this could jeopardise students' tax compliance. Additionally, a tax-free income of up to €32,000 for a PhD student is at significance variance from the average PhD stipend and would significantly exceed the net income of many post-doctoral researchers.

The IRCHSS indicated its willingness to modify its approach, perhaps lowering the level of additional income that an IRCHSS scholar can hold and/or including an explicit statement in the scholarship terms and conditions that the scholarship holder is responsible for ensuring their tax compliance. The Deans will continue to liaise with IRCHSS and the Registrars group on this issue.

### **1.3.3. IRCHSS and Non-EU Applicants**

The Deans of Graduate Studies group continues to insist on the However, IRCHSS have indicated that they expect their annual postgraduate scholarship awards to continue to decline. The Council awarded ninety-two scholarships to commence academic year 2010-11; this is a reduction from 145 in 2009-10. IRCHSS has invited the Deans of Graduate Studies to put forward a paper outlining how the Council could accommodate non-EU applicants that would not necessitate the council paying the full non-EU fees. The Council Director, also indicated that it would adopt the same approach to funding PhD fees as that which SFI recently adopted; that is to provide €5,500 for fees irrespective of fees charged at the university.

## **1.4. European / International Funding**

### **1.4.1. Seventh Framework Programme / IUA Marie Curie Office**

The Marie Curie Fellowship actions will close in August 2010 and there has been an increased interest in these over the last few months.

Apart from hands-on assistance to researchers preparing proposals for those schemes and ongoing support to contractors and fellows in Marie Curie projects in general, the National Contact Point and National Delegate (Dr. Conor O'Carroll) also contributed to a number of events related to the Marie Curie Actions programme:

- Teagasc, Oak Park FP7 Network Meeting in April 2010.
- UCD Research Marie Curie Fellowships meeting May 2010.
- FP7 Network Meeting, SFI, May 2010.

The FP7 meeting in SFI was a strategic meeting as the other FP7 network members (NCP's and ND's) were given a detailed overview of the Marie Curie programme and asked to promote Marie Curie actions at their specific events and with their clients in order to increase awareness of the programme. Until December 2009 there was an Enterprise Ireland person dedicated to Marie Curie, who has since retired. With the time constraints of the IUA NCP the FP7 network will provide support via increased dissemination methods.

The planned Research Officers meeting in Brussels in March 2010, has been postponed as a result of the flight disruptions.

### **1.4.2 'People' (Marie Curie) Programme – Participation and Results**

The results for the Initial Training Networks (call deadline December 22, 2009) were made available on May 31, 2010. There have been two successful proposals where Ireland is the coordinator and four as partners. The overall success rate for this call was 7.3%. However, there is a concern with the number of Irish proposals that were below threshold in this action.

### 1.4.3 ‘People’ (Marie Curie) Programme – Upcoming Calls and Deadlines

The next calls for the Marie Curie actions according to the draft work Programme for 2011, which will be finalised in July 2010, are as follows:

Marie Curie Action	Deadline
Reintegration Grants	September 7, 2010
Industry-Academia Partnerships and Pathways (IAPP)	December 9, 2010
Initial Training Networks (ITN)	February 10, 2011
International Research Staff Exchange Scheme (IRSES)	February 17, 2011
CoFunding of Regional, National and International Programmes	February 17, 2011

There will be information days organised for the IAPP and ITN programmes once the calls are announced later this year.

### 1.4.4. PeopleNetwork Project

The IUA is leading a work Package in an EU led project entitled Trans-national co-operation among National Contact Points for Marie Curie Actions (PeopleNetwork). PeopleNetwork aims to develop and implement a coordination mechanism for stimulating closer cooperation among National Contact Points for the PEOPLE programme in the Seventh Framework Programme. It will facilitate an improvement in the overall quality of NCP services across Europe in the area of mobility and increase the transparency of EU fellowships and training opportunities to ensure equal access for all.

The mid term review for this project was held in Tel Aviv, Israel, in May 2010. The web based survey for Marie Curie fellows, with which the IUA is charged with compiling and disseminating had received 4 responses by December 2009, but currently stands at more than 500. The data analysis will be conducted in July / August. Once the information has been analysed from the surveys, a decision needs to be taken in relation to the feedback that would benefit the project and the fellows. The surveys will then be refined, reduced and redistributed to gain additional feedback.

## 1.5. EURAXESS Ireland (Irish Researcher Mobility Office) and Web Portal

### 1.5.1. *Hosting Agreement Scheme and Extranet*

The office has processed **885** Hosting Agreements to date with a total of **24** accredited organisations including all Irish universities and six Institutes of Technology and three from Industry (LM Ericsson Ltd, Solar Print Ltd and IBM) have received their certificate of accreditation from the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment. 90% of all hosting agreements approved have been issued to researchers employed by the universities. There are currently **507** researchers working on their research projects under the hosting agreement scheme in Ireland.

The office processes an average number of **15** extensions to the issued hosting agreements a month.

The top two non EEA nationalities with hosting agreements are from **China and India** issued with **169 and 168** agreements respectively. They are followed by **US citizens** issued with **109** hosting agreements to date. There are **40** researchers with **Russian**; **29** with **Australian**, and **34** with **Canadian** citizenship employed under the scheme in Ireland. The other 57 non EEA countries have a small number of researchers with hosting agreements in Ireland.

To date, **401** researchers have availed of the immediate family unification opportunity and have their dependants with them for the duration of their research projects in Ireland.

### **1.5.2. EU Projects**

#### **1.5.2(a) MOREBRAIN**

This is an FP7 funded project to investigate the reasons that promote and hinder international mobility of researchers. It is collaboration with partners in Israel, Spain and Iceland, all countries with large research diasporas. A survey that investigates the reasons why researchers move or remain has been developed with the support of the UCD Geary Institute. Researchers based in over 48 European countries and the US has responded to the survey to date. The European and the USA based EURAXESS offices have been involved in promotion action of this survey. The survey to date has had over 3000 responses and data is being currently analysed. The results for respondents in Ireland will be correlated with the SIF Irish Universities Study (IUA) results.

#### **1.5.2(b) EURAXESS T.O.P**

Funded by the European Commission for 18 months, the aim of this project is to reinforce the quality, effectiveness and coherence of the services provided by the EURAXESS Services Network. The IUA has developed the content for the Bridgehead Organisation (BHO) Workshop to be held in Brussels on 23<sup>rd</sup> June. This followed an intense training needs analysis conducted with all BHO's across Europe through an online survey. The outcome of this workshop will help shape the subsequent one to be held in Zagreb in November. With the design of both of these annual training workshops, IUA is now recognised for its leading expertise in researcher mobility issues.

## **2. Strategic Innovation Fund**

### **2.1. Full Economic Cost Project**

The Full Economic Cost SIF Cycle II project which involves the detailed design and implementation of an FEC model across all universities continues to progress.

Following an extensive review of all aspects of the FEC Project (AAP Collection Process, FEC Model Objectives, Financial Basis for Model etc.) by international renowned academic expert Professor Werner Bruggeman and Mr Kris Moreels (both from B&M Consulting), a number of recommendations were presented to the National Steering Group (NSG) at a workshop on February 15<sup>th</sup>. Further discussions were had on

the recommendations and their implementation at subsequent NSG Meetings in March and April.

The NSG have agreed to adopt a parallel approach to completing the project over the coming year. This will involve two major tracks of work:

- Track 1: Completion of FEC Pilot 2 (this is the current FEC Model) which will be run with 08/09 Financial Accounts.
- Track 2: Implementation of a number of the B&M Recommendations on the FEC Model which will be run with 09/10 Financial Accounts.

A revised project plan has been developed for the completion of both tracks of work and has recently been signed off and agreed by the NSG.

Track 1 of the project is scheduled for completion at the end of August this year when outputs should be available from most institutions for comparison across the sector. It has been agreed by the NSG that these outputs will not be made available outside of the sector.

Track 2 of the project (Implementation of the B&M recommendations) involves a significant amount of consideration and analysis to agree a consistent sectoral approach to the recommendations before they are implemented in the FEC Models. A number of groups have been established for this purpose and have met or are meeting over the coming weeks. Once agreed, the recommendations will be implemented on the SAS Models in the latter end of the year. These models will be run in early/mid 2011 after which the first publishable outputs will be available for FEC across the sector.

## 2.2. Irish Universities Study

The **Irish Universities Study**<sup>1</sup> will formally come to an end in July. The Third and final round of the survey is now complete. IUA will be working with UCD Geary to analyse the data in great detail. Currently we are working on a report for PhD students that amalgamates all of the three surveys. This data demonstrates a real positive measurable effect of the impact of structured PhD programmes. The preliminary data was presented by C. O'Carroll at;

*European Universities Association, Council for Doctoral Education, FUB Germany, 4-5 June, "The Future of the PhD"*

*EU CREST Peer Learning Activity Workshop, Science Gallery, 8-10 June.*

The results were received with great interest and it is noteworthy that this is the first time anywhere that such data has been collected and presented.

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<sup>1</sup> The original SIF project was called "Student Feedback" but as it has evolved this more comprehensive title is now used to reflect the populations interrogated and data gathered.

### **2.3. IUA: Equity of Access Project: Update on Developments - Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) & Disability Access Route to Higher Education (DARE) June 2010**

#### ***Data: 2010 Applications to HEAR and DARE***

Preliminary data on HEAR states that **6,831** applicants completed the HEAR Form in 2010. This is **127%** increase on 2009 and of this group **4,228** submitted supporting documentation and were screened for eligibility. The final eligibility figures will be available in mid June. **2,254** applicants applied through DARE, **1834** were screened and **942** of these were deemed eligible. This represents a **26%** increase in overall number of DARE eligible applicants over 2009.

Two important factors contributed to these increased numbers: (i) the very successful communications campaign which targeted students and guidance counselors and (ii) the decision made to accept supporting documents up mid April. This decision was made in the light of the fact that the applicants were encountering considerable difficulty accessing official documents due to the go-slow in the public sector. During this extended time of two weeks an additional **1,250** HEAR and **40** DARE applications were received in the CAO.

#### ***Systems Development & Data Management***

The systems approach developed by UL, in conjunction with CAO, has brought about considerable efficiencies and also increased security for the participating HEIs. The HEAR Operators estimate that savings in terms of time allotted to screening was in the region of **50%**. Documentation is now distributed electronically at every stage in the process from application to offers stage. This has eliminated the risk inherent in the old paper-based system. This move also facilitates the collation of data for the purpose of analysis.

Credit for these developments is due to the CAO, the Admissions Officers and UL who all worked within a very tight timeframe to come up with solutions for the establishment of these effective systems.

#### ***Sustainability***

The following key steps, in addition to that outlined in the above paragraph, have been taken to ensure the long-term sustainability of HEAR & DARE

- (i) The Inter-Institutional Management (IIM) Group has been established and met in May and June. The minutes for same have been distributed to Registrars as requested. The Group has nominated Ann O'Brien (NUIM) as its chairperson and the IUA will act as secretary.
- (ii) The External Advisory Group has agreed to maintain its role as advisors to the schemes and will meet biannually.
- (iii) Much greater integration into mainstream admissions processes; including on-line forms for Review (Appeals) and the management of the offers process.

- (iv) Processes and procedures for all aspects of the schemes are in the process of being written up. This includes a number of manuals for (i) Data Management; (ii) Communications; (ii) Organisational Structures; (iv) HEAR Operations and (v) DARE Operations.
- (v) The contract for the Equity of Access Manager has been extended on a part-time basis for a year.

### ***Data Management***

As the current contract with UL is coming to a close, a meeting was held in UL on 1 June 2010 to review the year and to discuss the way forward. At this meeting UL expressed its desire and willingness to continue with this project, including greater integration with CAO. However, UL cautioned against the risk inherent in the schemes' overdependence on one HEI to deliver on such a key component. The solution proposed to address this was to identify another participating HEI that would twin with UL on this work thereby ensuring the body of knowledge & skills would be dispersed. They also suggested procuring an IT specialist from within the participating HEIs to take on the responsibility for technical work. Taking these points into consideration the Data Management Working Group will draw up a 2-3 year plan with the ultimate aim of establishing a permanent Data Management solution for HEAR & DARE. Such a solution would include an exit strategy for UL as Data Managers. This plan is to be finalised by mid-July 2010. UL are to outline the realistic cost of delivery on this project.

### ***Communications***

HEAR DARE Communications 2010 Strategy will be finalized in preparation for the July IIM meeting. The key focus on this campaign will be parents, developing relations with external organizations and improving internal communications.

### ***Issue Referred from the IIM Group to Registrars***

IIM Group endorsed an additional eligibility combination for HEAR and is currently seeking Registrars' approval for same. The proposed combination is: Income DEIS School & Area (Deprivation Index). Key points to note about this combination are that the Deprivation Index was relatively new two years ago when the combinations were agreed and that of the **38** applicants who met this combination in 08/09 **11** of this group sent in an appeal.

## **3. Funding**

### **3.1. Recurrent Funding**

#### **3.1.1. Current Funding**

The recurrent funding environment continues to be extremely challenging for universities. Following the annual accountability and budget meetings between the HEA and individual institutions the HEA wrote to institutions notifying them that

notwithstanding the extremely challenging budgetary environment the necessity to achieve balanced budgets in respect of 2010 is a priority for the HEA.

The funding outlook for 2011 also looks very bleak. The HEA has indicated that institutions should plan on the basis of further reductions in core allocations for 2011. In addition recent correspondence notes that ‘...it is our understanding that there should be no increases in EU full time undergraduate tuition fee levels or the student charge in respect of 2010/11.’ Furthermore institutions have been cautioned that there may be a requirement for further staff reductions in 2011.

The University Chief Finance Officers met at the beginning of June to consider potential funding strategies for the sector.

### **3.1.2 Recurrent Grant Allocation Model**

The HEA has indicated that the following RGAM developments are currently under consideration by the Authority:-

- Access funding, currently allocated to institutions on the basis of targeted funding independent of RGAM, is to be incorporated into RGAM from 2011.
- The introduction in 2011 of a mechanism to address or re-balance the shift in proportion of overall funding from core grant to fees and as a result the disproportionate increase in funding going to undergraduate relative to postgraduate students.
- A move towards a credit based funding model which would include part-time students. Any changes in this regard would not be implemented before 2012.
- The introduction of more research metrics in the allocations including metrics relating to commercialisation. Again any changes in this regard may not be implemented before 2012.

The Chief Finance Officers Group will be keeping developments under review.

### **3.1.3 Student Services Charge**

The minister for Education & Skills appeared before the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education & Science in May in relation to the funding of third level education and the disbursement of the student services charge. The Minister reiterated the position of the Department that the increase in the student charge to €1,500 was on the understanding that this would bring the contribution more into line with the real cost of providing student services and that the income is required to be used for student services related purposes.

The HEA is currently undertaking a review of the student services charge to ensure that income is being used for the purposes for which it is intended.

### **3.2. Pension Issues**

#### **3.2.1 *Proposed Transfer of University Pension Schemes***

The remaining university pension funds transferred to the National Pension Reserve Fund on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010.

#### **3.2.2 *Operational Issues Arising from the Transfer of University Pension Schemes***

There are a range of operational issues arising from the transfer of the funded schemes to the NPRF and the implementation of model schemes and an IUA working group is continuing to work with the HEA in addressing these issues.

### **3.3. Shared Services**

The IUA Shared Services Steering Group continues to meet on a monthly basis to progress initiatives in respect of shared services. Work is continuing in assessing each of the priority areas identified.

Deloitte were appointed to develop a business case and project roadmap for financial shared services for the sector and are due to complete their work over the coming weeks. Work is also on-going in relation to initiatives in respect of job recruitment advertising, pension administration and IT initiatives although progress has been slow.

### **3.4. Sectoral Procurement Initiatives**

Reporting to UCFOG the Procurement Working Group continues to meet on a regular basis to progress work in relation to sectoral procurement initiatives. The working group has developed a draft strategy for collaborative procurement for the sector, which is currently being considered by UCFOG.

The working group is also tasked with progressing the collaborative procurement of a number of high spend. A total of 13 commodities and/or services have been identified for consideration including the following:-

- Electricity
- PC's
- Insurance
- Cleaning/facilities management
- Office supplies/stationery
- Advertising
- Photocopiers
- Lab supplies

Work is progressing in respect of each of these areas. Some projects have now completed and significant progress has been made in a number of others with the issue of prequalification questionnaires and/or invitations to tender. Progress has been considerably slower in other areas where resistance is being encountered by budget holders.

### **3.5. Comptroller & Auditor General Review of the Third Level Sector**

Relevant extracts of the draft report of the C&AG on Management and Control in the third level sector was circulated to individual institutions and the IUA for comment and input. The IUA met with representatives from the C&AG's Office and subsequently made a written submission to the C&AG in respect of a number of matters of sectoral relevance. The C&AG indicated a willingness to take on board the inputs provided by the IUA. We await the circulation of a revised report.

## **4. Governance Conference**

The Secretaries Group organised a one day conference on governance, internal control and risk management, which took place on Tuesday 30th March 2010 in Croke Park. Representatives from the IUA Plenary Group, Chairs of Governing Authorities, Deans, Head of Internal Audit Functions, Audit Committee members and Chairs of Finance Committees were invited to the conference along with representatives from funding bodies and government departments.

Under the broad umbrella of governance, the three selected themes for the conference were:

Theme 1: Moving from compliance to performance

Theme 2: Innovation and risk management within the governance agenda

Theme 3: Aligning governance and strategy with outcomes and deliverables

The initial addresses covered three key governance themes, with presentations from:

**Michael Shattock:** Visiting Professor, Centre for Higher Education Studies, Institute of Education, University of London, and founding Director of the MBA in Higher Education Management. He also chaired the OECD review of Irish Higher Education in 2003-2004.

**Chris Horn:** Co-founded IONA Technologies and is a current member of the Innovation Taskforce, an advisory group established by the Taoiseach.

**Thomas Esterman:** Head of the Unit Governance, Autonomy and Funding at the European University Association.

Those addresses were followed by a research paper prepared by the Institute of Public Administration/Secretaries Group on international developments in relation to University governance. The three workshops focussed on the practical challenges of implementing the evolving governance agenda as outlined in the earlier presentations. This format allowed for full participation in a rich debate and challenging discussion, as well as charting possible ways forward in the coming years. The conference format also afforded an opportunity to meet peers carrying out similar governance and leadership roles and to share knowledge, insight and good practice.

## 5. **ICLA – Irish Copyright Licensing Agency**

Irish Copyright Licensing Agency (ICLA) is Ireland's reproduction rights organisation. The ICLA recently issued invoices to all universities, for the period October '09 – September '10, and were requesting a payment of **€5.10 per student**. The Secretaries Group entered into discussions with Samantha Holman of the ICLA over this proposed charge. Following these discussions the ICLA agreed to reduce the fee payable to **€4.60 per student** for the 2009/10 year. The ICLA also agreed to issue new invoices to all universities and credit notes to those IoTs who had already paid the original charge of €5.10 per student.

## 6. **Garda Vetting**

Ned Costello wrote on 4 June to Dermot Ahern TD, Minister for Justice and Law Reform, with copy to Fachtna Murphy, Garda Commissioner, regarding the significant deterioration in turnaround times in processing applications for Garda Vetting (currently at 15 weeks, potentially at 20 weeks by autumn 2010, which equates to 80% of the teaching year), and expressing serious concerns regarding the potential risk this poses for a number of academic programmes provided by the universities, especially in the areas of medicine, health, social work and education.

## 7. **Leaving Certificate Mathematics**

As reported in IUA Reviews January and March 2010, following a meeting between university Presidents and Minister Conor Lenihan, a small dedicated group had been brought together by IUA and met twice with the objective of developing a suite of short to medium term actions which would underpin the objectives of Project Maths.

However, given that many of the members of this group were identical to the Project Maths Implementation Support Group, established in parallel by Batt O'Keeffe when he was Minister for Education and Science, it was decided to disband this IUA-led group in favour of the larger and DES-resourced Project Maths Implementation Support Group. The wide-ranging membership of this latter included IBEC, various professional bodies in the STEM areas, different DES sections, NCCA, Forfas, Discover Science and Engineering, representatives of secondary schools and teachers, IoTs and universities. This group was chaired by Frank Turpin, ex-Intel, and mandated to report to Minister DES with proposals in three areas: promoting positive attitudes to maths, encouraging more students to do Higher Level maths and adding value to Project Maths. Following six meetings, the group finalised a report which examined each of these three areas and made a series of recommendations, with a strong focus on improving the quality of maths teaching and learning in the school sector. It is intended to reconvene the group twice yearly to examine progress towards implementation of these recommendations.

On 23 April 2010, Mary Coughlan, the new Minister for Education and Skills, wrote to John Hughes, IUA President, with a request that the universities reintroduce bonus points for maths, along with a number of other requests linked to admissions and matriculation issues and maths. Similar letters were issued to DIT and to IoTI. Each university is currently considering these requests and IUA Registrars will hold an initial discussion regarding a common response at their meeting on 21 June 2010.

## **8. National Qualifications Authority of Ireland**

### **8.1. Placement of University Postgraduate Diplomas, Higher Diplomas, and Minor, Special Purpose, and Supplemental Awards on the NFQ**

At the request of IUA Registrars, a working group was established to address the outstanding issues surrounding the placement on the National Framework of Qualifications of the award formerly titled the Higher Diploma in Education, and currently designated the Postgraduate Diploma in Education. The working group, which was chaired by Prof. Tom Collins of NUI Maynooth, included representatives of all the universities and colleges of education, as well as the Teaching Council. A joint secretariat was provided by the IUA and the NQAI. The group approved a full overview report, containing a clear recommendation that the award remain as a Higher Diploma in Education at Level 8 on the NFQ. A number of follow-up issues are currently being addressed prior to formal placement of this award by the universities on the NFQ.

### **8.2. IUA / NQAI Framework Implementation Network**

Following on from the publication by the joint IUA / NQAI Framework Implementation Network (FIN) of the outcomes of its work during 2008-09, “University awards and the National Framework of Qualifications: Issues around the Design of Programmes and the Use and Assessment of Learning Outcomes” (available online at <http://www.nfqnetwork.ie/>), the network has reconvened to consider the broad theme of ‘lifelong learning’ and how the NFQ can serve to advance this policy area.

The first 2010 FIN meeting took place in February with a number of external speakers invited to discuss various aspects of Lifelong Learning and where the Network should best concentrate its efforts for 2010. Two additional meetings have since also taken place, in May and June 2010, with the focus of the network now on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), including the identification of possible case studies, identification of principles for RPL and programme design, assessment methods and quality assurance, and identification of principles for managing, organising and communicating RPL.

## **9. Internationalisation of Education**

Following the move by the International Education Board of Ireland (IEBI) to Enterprise Ireland, and the management of the Education Ireland brand by EI, the universities have

been engaging with EI in its new role around a number of key topics. These include the development of an Irish Universities brand within the broader Education Ireland brand, and the promotion of the Irish Universities brand in key international markets. A successful initial event in New York in early May 2010, attended by 3 university Presidents, at which the Irish Universities Study publication regarding international students was launched, will be followed up in Boston and Chicago later in 2010 with a range of targeted activities. A new Irish Universities brochure has been produced by IUA to assist with these.

### **9.1. IUA Recruitment of International Education Manager**

In June the IUA advertised for the new position of International Education Manager. This followed on the request from IUA Council for greater collective strategic support in this area. The main purpose of the new 2 year position will be to lead the development and implementation of a sectoral strategy for the expansion of international education, encompassing the seven universities.

### **9.2. European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Information & Promotion Network**

All 47 EHEA countries and all Bologna Process consultative members were invited to send participants to the first meeting of this network, which took place on 27 May. At the request of DES, Lewis Purser attended as the Irish representative. The ToR proposed for this network were as follows:

- Develop an overview of existing information and promotion initiatives / activities
- Contribute to production of information material.
- Contribute to the EHEA website
- Foster exchange and best practice
- Design measures to enhance the promotion of the EHEA.

The network is being co-chaired by representatives from Austria, Belgium (Flemish Community) and Estonia. The next meeting is planned for November 2010. There are potentially useful synergies between the work of this group and the development of a more integrated Irish University brand in key international markets, in particular in ensuring that Irish universities are well covered in these nascent European information and promotional campaigns.

## **10. Communications / Events**

### **10.1. Media Relations**

#### **10.1.1. Recent Press Releases & Articles**

- Ireland's National Portal for Open Access Research Goes Live – 8<sup>th</sup> June 2010  
<http://www.iua.ie/media-and-events/press-releases/releases/2007/RIANGoesLive8June10.html>

### **10.2. Communications for SIF Projects**

#### **10.2.1. Development of Comms for the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) and the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE)**

The work of the HEAR and DARE Communications Working Group is progressing well and a Communications Plan for the 2011 scheme is underway. John McGinnity, Admissions Officer at NUI Maynooth and Brian Lynch, Communications Officer at Athlone Institute of Technology have both joined the group. When the plan has been finalised it will be passed on to the Inter-Institutional Management Group for sign off. It is intended that all marketing materials be produced over the summer months to be distributed to schools in the first two weeks of September.

In the absence of SIF funding the budget for HEAR and DARE communications will be split between the participating institutions. The communications tools for 2011 will be cost effective yet impactful including;

- A combination brochure and application guide.
- Student flyers - cheaper than a full brochure to print.
- Schools presentation video a typical made available for viewing online.
- Social Media channels (facebook & twitter) for the Access College brand.

#### ***10.2.2. Go Live Date for Rian.ie***

The Librarians Open Access Project officially closed at the end of March and the portal went live on June 8<sup>th</sup>. The portal will be officially launched in the autumn and a request for participation has been sent in to the Education Minister's Office.

RIAN is an Open Access portal - giving access to Open Access research content only. The term Open Access is understood around the academic world as applying to that subset of research publications which can be accessed freely. Open Access is understood not to apply to the total of research publication and therefore would not be confused with national research output studies or citation studies.

SFI and a number of other Irish research funders have introduced a mandate requiring their funded researchers to deposit material in Open Access repositories. It is hoped therefore that the quantity and quality of material harvested from the individual repositories of the 7 universities and DIT will increase in the months leading up to the formal launch.

#### ***10.2.3. Published Reports for Irish Universities Study***

IUA Communications is applying professional design and layout to a number of reports from round 1 of the Irish Universities Study. The first of five reports being produced is complete and is available on the IUA website. The remainder will follow in June:

1. Report on International Students in the Irish Universities - complete  
<http://www.iaa.ie/iaa-activities/documents/IUAReportonIntlStudents2010.pdf>
2. Report on PhD Students in the Irish Universities
3. Gender at a Glance: Evidence from the Irish Universities Study
4. Report on Taught Programme Students in Irish Universities

## 5. Undergraduate Research Experiences: Benefits and Good Practice

### **10.3. Marketing the University Sector and IUA Groups**

#### **10.3.1. International Officers Group**

The IUA Communications Manager assisted the International Officers Group with preparation of the Connecting Continents Luncheon in New York May 6<sup>th</sup>. A combined university image PowerPoint display was created by the IUA Comms manager. An Irish Universities Study report on International Students was also produced for the event and speech notes prepared by IUA for President John Hughes.

With budget from the SIF Chinese Scholarship/Attracting International Students project the following work has been carried out:

- Addition of IUA International Officers Group to the IUA Extranet
- Updating IUA Electronic Undergrad Brochure & production of hard copies - a copy of the new brochure can be found on the IUA website as follows <http://www.iua.ie/iua-activities/documents/IUAInternationalBrochureJune2010.pdf>

#### **10.3.2 Communications Officers Group**

The IUA Communications Manager arranged for a leading social media practitioner, Krishna De, to provide a workshop for the communications officers and their colleagues. The workshop took place in IUA on Tuesday May 18<sup>th</sup> and provided an overview and introduction to social media as part of the marketing and communications plan of the organisation. It included case studies of organisations who have successfully implemented social media communications to build their brand online, attract more students and enhance their communications plan. The workshop was very well attended by communications personnel from each of the 7 universities (and was also open to IUA staff). Topics covered included:

- The changing face of communications
- Copyright and posting of content online
- Guidance on developing a Social Media Policy for the organization
- Listening and learning from online conversations
- Facebook – not just for just for fun and family
- Integrating a Twitter Channel
- Business blogging to build buzz
- Using multimedia (photograph, online video and audio) to bring your story to life
- LinkedIn - expanding your network for and connecting to alumni
- Social media in a crisis and how to respond

### **10.4. IUA Extranet**

Membership of the IUA Extranet has now been extended to various IUA working groups including FEC, Deans of Graduate Studies, Procurement Officers, International Officers

and Communications Officers. As always the site is accessed with a username and password from the IUA Homepage. Full telephone support and training is available through the software supplier and details have been sent to all members.

#### **10.5. IUA Social Media**

IUA is now on Twitter with the address @IUAcmmms. Tweets are generally education news related and retweets of university generated stories. The number of followers of IUA twitter is growing steadily.