

**C.H.I.U. Review [04/2] for C.H.I.U. Meetings
on 5th April, 2004 in the University of Limerick**

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1. Research

1.1 *Research Strategy*

The Research Strategy policy that was approved for circulation at the last Council meeting has been issued to the entire academic community as part of the consultation process. In order to ensure that the Arts Humanities and Social Sciences are taken fully into account, the VPDOR Group agreed to form a working group with representatives from each university to help expand the scope of the policy.

Representatives of the VPDOR Group will have an initial discussion on the policy proposals with the key funding agencies (Merrion Group) on 15th April. The Group will participate in the IUQB sponsored Experts' Meeting on Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes, 28th/29th April.

1.2 *Research Overheads*

The overheads report was published in August and has been distributed to key personnel in all the universities. It is also available on the HEA website at www.heai.ie

The report was accepted unanimously by the Inter Departmental Committee, chaired by An Tánaiste; however there have been no moves to date to actually implement the recommendations.

1.3. *EU Irish Presidency 2004*

Overall the Presidency has had a low profile but there have been a number of activities with a direct bearing on the universities and research going on in the background. The most relevant so far to the universities is the plan to lower immigration barriers to researchers coming to Ireland who originate in non EU countries. The possibility of a European fund for basic research under the Seventh Framework Programme will allow Irish researchers to compete with the best in Europe.

1.3.1. *Opening Ireland to Researchers from outside the European Union*

In mid February the Tánaiste, Mary Harney, T.D., announced that for certain categories of non EU workers currently in Ireland their spouses will be allowed to apply for Work Permits. The lack of progress in this area has caused major problems for universities in attracting staff from outside the EU. The government intends to go further and;

- Identify **Researcher** as a specific category of worker
- Provide easy access to Researchers and their families to visas and work permits using a system based on the French “Scientific Visa”.

This will make Irish universities far more competitive in attracting researchers and their families to Ireland. The European Commission has just issued a Communication on this topic¹.

¹ *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the presentation of a proposal for a directive and two proposals for recommendations on the admission of third-country nationals to carry out scientific research in the European Community, COM(2004) 178 final.*

1.3.2. *Conference on Research Excellence, 16th/17th February*

For the first time ever agreement has been reached to support basic research in all disciplines at a European level. A two day EU Presidency Symposium on "Europe's Search for Excellence in Basic Research", was held in Dublin Castle on 16th/17th February. There was a wide range of participants including Ministers for Science, Heads of Funding Agencies and Nobel Prize winners. There was very strong support by all of the Ministers and scientists for the proposal to fund basic research at a European level and consensus was reached that there should be a budget line for Basic Research in the Seventh Framework Programme (2006-2010).

- This will be an investigator driven programme with no special conditions that are usually present: no need for European collaboration, no cohesion criteria, etc. This will mean that an Irish researcher will be able to apply for funding to support their own research programme without any special conditions.
- It will cover **all** of sciences and engineering including human and social.
- The European added value will be the competition at a European level of researchers across the Community.
- Selection will be based on peer review as confirmed by the scientific community (quoting Achilleas Mitsos, Director General of the European Commission's research directorate)

1.3.3. *Meeting of Directors General for Higher Education and Heads of Rectors Conferences, 5th/6th March – Role of Universities in Society/Economy – Example of Ireland*

This was a 2 day meeting focused meeting of these groups. The opportunity was used to showcase the role of Irish universities in the economy and wider society. The conference attendees were welcomed in an opening address by Prof. Wrixon, UCC. The role of the C.H.I.U. and the universities in supporting Irish industry was highlighted in a number of presentations.

1.4. *European Research Area*

1.4.1 *Steering Group on Researcher Mobility*

The European Commission has established a new group to oversee the implementation of a number of initiatives and directives on the mobility of researchers; Dr. C. O'Carroll, C.H.I.U. Research Office, has been nominated by the Tanaiste as Irish representative. The issues to be considered by the group will include the continuation of actions to improve conditions for the mobility of researchers (e.g. visas for the spouses of researchers); introducing a charter and code of conduct for researchers. C.H.I.U. will establish a national group to discuss these issues so that the Irish universities will play a central role.

1.4.2 *European action to increase Human Resources in Science and Technology*

The Commission has appointed a group chaired by Prof. J.M. Gago to study a European approach to reversing the trend of young people turning their backs on science. Gago is the former Portuguese minister of science and the architect of the Lisbon Strategy and European Research Area. Dr. C. O'Carroll, C.H.I.U. Research Office, is the Irish representative. The Irish submission to this group contains a number of key recommendations to the European Commission as to how to increase public awareness of S&T.

1.4.3. *Barcelona Target (3% GDP on R&D 2010)*

Three working groups have been established by the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment to develop an action plan for Ireland. The Group, chaired by C. O'Carroll, has been looking at the 3% Target from the perspective of public investment in R&D. There has been a delay on the final report due to inactivity in Forfás but it is now due at the end of April.

1.4.4. *Science Foundation Ireland*

SFI have recently completed an audit of how overheads on SFI funded programmes are spent by the universities. At a recent meeting with Bill Harris he stated that SFI has concerns about how the overheads are spent. However we have yet to see a copy of the auditors report. He also indicated that SFI is planning to hire another 30 staff members as project officers.

Science Foundation Ireland will invest up to €500k in an initiative that could give more than 50 second-level teachers per year the opportunity to conduct research in Irish laboratories over a period of three summers. Successful teachers will receive support to conduct research alongside an SFI-funded researcher or research team during school holiday periods for up to eight weeks. The goal is to help teachers renew their interest in science as researchers, connect them with science faculty in the universities and institutes of technology, and enhance the teaching of science across the educational system.

1.4.5. *“Young Investigator” Award*

The C.H.I.U. Research Office developed a “Young Investigator” scheme and circulated this to the research community for input. This elicited a very lively response and this has been passed on to SFI who are planning to launch this scheme soon. While it retains most of the features of the original C.H.I.U. proposal, there is one notable difference. A university that hosts a SFI Young Investigator must offer the fellow a permanent post after the end of the five year SFI grant. This campaign was added to the scheme without any consultation with C.H.I.U.

1.5. *IRCSET*

Embark Postgraduate Research Scholarship Call (2004)

The Embark Initiative has announced details of the 2004 postgraduate research scholarship scheme (first call) which will fund up to 150 new entrant Masters or Doctorate level researchers in the sciences, engineering and technology (www.ircset.ie/grant_schemes/postgrad.html).

1.6. *IRCHSS*

The Humanities Council has not met since January as 5 member of the Council Members have completed their terms of office and have yet to be replaced. Indications are that the Minister will appoint 5 new members by the end of March.

1.7. *Enterprise Ireland*

Enterprise Ireland has finally launched the Intellectual Property Protection Fund for the Higher Education Sector and it will take effect from 1st April 2004.

1.8. *All Island Research Portal – Expertise Ireland*

The current status of the portal is as follows: seven universities have placed staff expertise data on the portal DCU (355), UCD (409), NUI Maynooth (74) and QUB (249), UCC (75), UL (67) and UU (410). A South-West launch is being planned for Cork on 29th April and the European launch is planned for 25th May.

1.9. *EU Sixth Framework Programme*

1.9.1 *Marimon Mid Term Review and planning for FP7*

The European Commission has set up a high-level expert panel, to carry out the mid-term review of the new FP6 instruments, namely the Networks of Excellence and Integrated Projects, under the direction of Dr Ramon Marimon. The C.H.I.U. Research Office is preparing a submission, based on the experience and opinion of the seven universities of the new instruments. The VPDOR, Finance Officers, Research Officers and ILO groupings are inputting to the process. In addition, the Research Office plans to convene members of these groups on a regular basis as a planning forum for FP7.

1.9.2. *Human Resources & Mobility Programme – Marie Curie*

The Marie Curie Programme had several deadlines since January, including both host-driven and individual actions. Ireland's success to date has been significantly higher than the EU average and results for the Calls from end-2003 are imminent. The National Contact Point Office in C.H.I.U. continues to work with potential applicants from all sectors, and the upcoming May deadlines are significant for universities in terms of large-scale contracts for post-doctoral research teams (Transfer of Knowledge and Excellence Grants).

1.9.3. *European Network of Mobility Centres*

Siobhan Harkin, C.H.I.U. Research Office, is currently negotiating contract terms for CAIRDE – the new Mobility Centre and Network for Ireland, which is expected to begin operations in June 2004. The EC contribution is €200K for 3 years and will fund the manning of a new office and training for university personnel to provide advice to international researchers coming to Ireland.

1.10. *Media Coverage*

The relevance of research to economic development and the need for increased investment has been receiving increased newspaper coverage recently.

2. *University Funding*

2.1 *HEA Recurrent Funding Model Review*

In 2002 the HEA commenced a review process for the universities' recurrent funding model. A study was commissioned to review funding mechanisms and principles operating internationally and to identify best practice in the context of its application to a revised Irish model. On 23rd February 2004 the HEA issued a consultation document derived from this report, seeking views by 31st March. In view of the range of consultation required within and between universities in order to respond comprehensively, UCFOG Chair wrote to the HEA on 10th March seeking an extension to 30th April which the HEA has accepted.

Internal consultations have been taking place within universities and UCFOG met on 26th March to consider the report in detail together with the views received from other university officers. A number of initial concerns were flagged by UCFOG on 3rd March:

- The report alluded to strategic proposals however there was no reference to the ongoing OECD review or any provision for OECD recommendations once finalised.
- The approach was conservative given that the unit cost system was to remain a central tenet of the allocation process. The report concludes that the system is sound, however university experience would not support this, particularly in the context of resource allocation.
- The model appeared to focus on teaching only but the same allocations are used to support research and this link was not referred to.
- The increased portion of funding towards strategic areas (10-15%) caused concern in the context that there is no mention of the model being used to increase the overall quantum of funding, but rather it could imply that the funding available for core activities would be eroded.
- Multiannual budgeting was identified as a key element of a new funding model however it is not identified as a prerequisite to the new model which was disappointing particularly given that the development of strategic planning and processes is advocated.

A report will be made to C.H.I.U. Plenary on 5th April.

2.2. HEA Review of University Financial Positions

On 6th February 2004 the HEA wrote to the Heads formally advising them that a Working Group had been established to review university financial positions. The terms of reference indicated that extensive analyses of historical financial data would be performed with a clear emphasis on cash resources. Universities were also requested to provide business/financial strategies for the period from 2003/04 to 2007/08. On 13th February UCFOG responded to the HEA *welcoming the prospect of HEA policy guidelines which would support university endeavours to strategically manage their affairs*. Meetings were requested with the Working Group at an early stage in order to contextualise the information submitted taking account of different university structures and activities together with the conditions under which government funding is allocated.

A further HEA request on 15th March acknowledged the timely responses from the universities and sought more specific information linking strategies with financial forecasts, and university estimates of cash and reserve requirements. Information on planned capital expenditure was also requested notwithstanding the ongoing Kelly Capital Review. The HEA indicated that meetings between the Working Group and the universities would be held in late April. A meeting is being sought with the HEA to clarify issues arising.

2.3. Recurrent Funding 2004

All universities have submitted 2004 budgets to the HEA and a number of budget meetings have been held to date. The HEA appeared to signal at some meetings that staff numbers might be reduced through redundancy measures. In accordance with the Section 37 of the Universities Act, to date four universities anticipating budget shortfalls have written to the HEA.

Further to the C.H.I.U. Council strategy meeting on 26th January (Section 4.3), C.H.I.U. Chair met with UCFOG and advised that the Council was seeking information on funding issues in order to address and inform issues/perceptions being raised in the media and by the Minister and his officials. UCFOG undertook to address this but noted that a credible and comprehensive report on the impact of funding cuts required substantive input from the academic and support areas to demonstrate the consequences.

Unit costs 2000/01: Unit cost returns for 2000/01 were finally issued on 3rd February 2004. (No adjustments were made to the 2003 core grant in the absence of finalised unit cost data). UCFOG have identified a range of fundamental weaknesses with the system and its operation and these will be raised with the HEA in the context of discussions on the HEA's Review of Recurrent Funding Mechanism.

2.4. Tuition Fees

2.4.1. Professors Colm Harmon and John Sheehan, UCD published an article in the Irish Banking Review on the question of the reintroduction of third level tuition fees. The authors argue that tuition fees should be re-introduced because Irish third level graduates benefit significantly from their education in the form of higher education earnings (higher than most other Europeans) and because the abolition of fees in 1994 has not increased equality of access to higher education as intended.

They found that the “private rate of return” to individuals in Ireland from schooling is at the top of the European table of estimates. They argue that, given such high “private” returns, there would need to be significant returns to society over and above what is accruing to the individual in order to justify State subsidies to higher education.

“If all society gets from the investment are higher paid individuals, it might be logical to suggest these individuals make some contribution to the costs of their education without belittling in any way the very positive outcome that this represents”

As an exercise to widen access to third level education, the authors believe that it is an experiment that has failed, as inequalities on participation have not decreased in recent years. In addition to the results of UK-based research, they point to the Higher Education Authority's *Supporting Equity in Higher Education* study as showing that there is more to inequality of access than student aid and fees; much of the inequality can be attributed to differential performance well before third level entry.

Concluding that the abolition of tuition fees has been an expensive experiment, estimated at €11m or about 15% of all government expenditure on third level education, a set of proposals are made as follows:-

- Introduce cost-related fees for all undergraduate courses,
- Use the savings to finance extra student loans and grants,
- Have a gradual tapering of grant eligibility with respect to income (say between €30,000 and €130,000),
- Target grants on social need and loans on prospective earnings if possible,
- If warranted, use the changes to transfer resources to earlier interventions at first and second levels but this should not be based on *ad hoc* measures,
- If institutions can earn fees based on marginal costs, remove quantitative restrictions.

2.4.2. Fees Levels 2004/05

UCFOG are considering a draft HEA submission on the undergraduate tuition fee increase 2004/05 on 5th April. Initial estimates indicate that the sector could be seeking grant and tuition fee increases for 2005 in the region of 11%. Even this level of increase is contingent on separate funding being provided for a new national pay agreement in 2005. The suggested increase does not at this point take account of any additional funding which would be required arising from the sectoral strategic plan.

2.4.3. Non-EU fees: At least two universities appear to have decided that they will use a different approach to calculating to that agreed in 2003.

2.4.4. Capital Funding 2004

The Kelly Capital Review is expected to report to the HEA in April. It is unlikely that any funding decisions will be made in the near future, although the government announced approval of €60m for the Cork School of Music on 25th March, 2004.

2.5. PRTL Cycle 3

Following the announcement ending of the pause on PRTL Cycle 3 funding on 7th November the universities received notification of funding in February 2004. However funding has been allocated in respect of 2004 only and it appears the Department of Finance made no commitment for 2005. It is still not clear to what extent it is intended to meet outstanding payments in respect of inflation costs and S843 shortfalls.

2.6. ESF Undergraduate Skills Programmes

UCFOG have noted that falls in student enrolments have impacted differently on the universities and that the HEA has not addressed the key issues raised in the C.H.I.U. submission in November. A meeting is to be sought with the HEA to discuss the funding process and how it might take account of falling student levels without effectively cutting university core resources for the programmes.

2.7. Finance Act 2004 – Research and Development

Section 33 of the 2004 Finance Act provides for a 20% tax credit of qualifying research and development expenditure (as defined in the Act) as an incentive to companies. Where this R&D is carried out by a university, there is a limit of 5% of sums paid to universities available for tax credit. Initial advice to C.H.I.U. has indicated that an increase in the ceiling would not be considered by the Minister for Finance until the Finance Bill 2005. It is intended to proceed on this basis.

2.8. Pensions Issues

2.8.1. Universities Act Section 25 (7) – Universities Superannuation Scheme

The C.H.I.U. Working Group on Pensions met on 20th January and 4th March 2004 to consider how to progress the draft superannuation scheme and related issues with the HEA, DES and Department of Finance. On behalf of the universities, Mr. A. Broxson (IPT) has been pursuing the Department of Finance for clarity on the provisions of the Protection of Employees (Part-Time Workers) Act as they apply to pensions, to no avail. The lag by the Department in addressing these matters in the two years since the Act came into effect is considered very unsatisfactory. It was agreed by the Group that following incorporation of agreed amendments to the draft scheme, a meeting would be

sought with the HEA and possibly DES and the Department of Finance. Funding issues set out in discussion will also be taken up at this forum.

2.8.2. *Changes to Public Service Pension Schemes 1st April 2004:*

The Public Service Superannuation Bill 2004 was published in February to give effect to the changes to retirement provisions announced by the Minister for Finance last November.

2.9. *Nursing*

Meetings of the Liaison Group are continuing with pensions representatives from the four universities due to meet with the Group on 1st April to discuss aspects of the arrangements for pension entitlements for nurse tutors who have transferred to the universities.

3. HEA Issues

3.1 *University Financial Reporting – Adoption of Consolidated Format from 30/9/03*

Following submission of the draft model format to the C&AG on 17th April 2003, a formal response was received on 19th February 2004 setting out a number of matters to be discussed. A meeting of the Working Group will be held on 1st April to consider the following:

- 1) a draft template audit report prepared by PWC,
- 2) draft responses to correspondence raised by the C&AG and HEA.

UCFOG will then be updated and a group composed of UCFOG and Working Group representatives will seek a meeting with the HEA, and as appropriate thereafter a meeting will be requested with the C&AG. UCFOG will be setting out issues relating to the broader public and internal university perceptions arising from the new format and developing recommendations for C.H.I.U. Council on how these might be handled.

3.2. *Fee Status of Students*

3.2.1 *EU Accession States*

Universities have been received enquiries from new and existing students from EU Accession States regarding their fee status. Clarification is required as currently students in the system cannot change EU status for fees purposes. Both the HEA and DES have been pressed for a response on the issue.

3.2.2. *Definition of an EU Student*

The issue of a student's fee status on progression to postgraduate studies is being considered by the Registrars Group.

3.3. *HEA Review of Equality Policies*

The Equality Review Team report to the HEA recommended to C.H.I.U. that effective action needs to be taken by the universities to deal with the gender imbalance in higher staff positions. The Gender Equality Unit of the Department of Education and Science has approved a grant for a research project to examine the culture of senior appointment in the education sector and institutional framework within which senior appointments are made. Professor Kathleen Lynch, UCD, who is running the project has approached C.H.I.U. with a view to securing university participation in the project.

3.4. *Institiúid Teangeolaíochta*

Universities in the Dublin area have been approached by the HEA in regard to the transfer of staff from the Institiúid Teangeolaíochta. Concerns expressed by the Secretaries' Group in relation to ring fencing of budget for transferred and responsibility for pension rights were conveyed to the HEA by C.H.I.U.

4. Future Strategy/ Policy

4.1. *OECD*

The C.H.I.U. Council considered a draft C.H.I.U. submission for the OECD prepared by the C.H.I.U. Strategy Task Force at its meeting on 26th January, 2004. Amendments proposed at the meeting and subsequently by Council Members were incorporated in the final draft of the submission sent to the OECD on 2nd February, 2004. Separate submissions were also made by the IUQB and the Universities' Retention Network. The C.H.I.U. Meeting with the OECD Review Team took place on 17th February, 2004 and was attended by the seven University Heads. The meeting with the Review Team was a challenging and constructive engagement. C.H.I.U. followed up on discussions at the meeting with a supplementary submission on QA. The Review Team visited UCD, UCC and UL on 18th, 24th and 25th February respectively.

4.2. *Minister's Priorities*

In his address to the IUQB Conference in NUIG on 6th February, 2004, Minister Dempsey stated that as well as restructuring third level education, improving its internal efficiency and raising its quality as part of the Bologna Process, important challenges that must be addressed were:-

- We must make decisions on the most appropriate models of tertiary education,
- We must find a better way to resource the expansion that is needed,
- We must determine how the research role of higher education fits into an expanded third-level education system,
- We must equip all of our citizens for effective participation in the 'Knowledge Society'
- we must ensure that an increasing proportion of them continue to tertiary education to achieve this.

He discussed three options for funding expansion:-

- to increase government resources overall,
- to increase the share of government resources going to tertiary education at the expense of other areas of government funding, or
- to increase the private resources going into tertiary education.

He also raised the question as to whether the model of a comprehensive research and teaching university should continue to be the norm.

In a speech on 27th February at UCD to an international symposium – “*Managing the University Community*”, the Minister for Education and Science emphasised the need for the Legislative and the Executive to act for all citizens to set certain parameters of performance in covering areas such as –

- Equity of access,
- Relevance to economic needs,
- Commitment to e-learning and to Information Communications Technology,

- Commitment to lifelong learning,
- Outreach to other communities,
- Balance of funding from various sources.

He spoke of increasing the openness and sensitivity of universities to the needs of the broader community as the price of academic freedom. He also identified as key areas for action –

- The need for dynamic decision making leadership and internal flexibility in universities,
- A serious commitment to quality improvement
- Focus on and reward teaching ability

4.3. C.H.I.U. Strategy Process

The C.H.I.U. Council discussed C.H.I.U. priorities at its meeting on 25/26th January, 2004. Priority areas for sectoral agreement and action were confirmed as Internal Reform, Access, Lifelong Learning, Role of the Universities in Public Policy Making, Governance, Professional Education and Training within Universities, Quality Assurance, Research, University Financing and the Role of the Universities in Economic Development.

Council discussions on 27th February were chaired by an independent facilitator and it was agreed to commission papers on a number of the issues with a view to establishing sectoral positions as soon as possible. Progress on QA is to be expedited through the IUQB and on Research through the C.H.I.U. Research Office. In relation to funding, it was agreed that it would be necessary to identify the level of increased investment that would be required for universities to contribute to their full potential to the development of the knowledge society and economy and the case needed to be backed up by clear expenditure headings and amounts. This matter was referred to the UCFOG Chair and a draft paper for consideration and discussion was prepared. It was acknowledged that a vigorous lobbying and communications strategy would have to be implemented to win increased investment and that credibility of the universities' case would be dependent on commitment to internal reform.

4.4. *Future Third Level Enrolments*

The media in covering the drop in CAO applications for 2004/05 formed the conclusion that targets for mature and access students were not being met by the colleges and that the figures might have far reaching effects for third level institutions if the decline was the beginning of a trend. On the other hand the Minister for Education and Science in his speech at NUIG (4.2 above) referred to the challenge of increasing the numbers of students in third level, but DES has yet to produce projections for third level student enrolments, a matter which was the subject of widespread media coverage at the end of January 2004. The availability of up-to-date enrolment projections will be critical to the work of the OECD Review Team, the O'Kelly Group on capital projects, the Inter-departmental Group on Internationalisation of Education Services and the Enterprise Strategy Group.

4.5. *International Students* ***IDP Australia***

On 20th February, C.H.I.U. Chair, Dr. Wrixon, also Chair of the C.H.I.U. International Working Group, wrote to C.H.I.U. Council members advising them of the outcome of C.H.I.U. negotiations with IDP and sought their responses to a revised proposal that had been clarified by IDP. The minimum number of universities required by IDP to agree a contract was three. UCD, UCC and NUIG have indicated their agreement to engage IDP, and NUIM have raised a number of questions for clarification. Arrangements are being made for a meeting of responsible senior officers in the universities concerned to make and co-ordinate the necessary preparations for engaging IDP.

4.6. *Access*

Access is one of the C.H.I.U. priority issues and a paper has been prepared by Professor Áine Hyland for consideration by C.H.I.U. A presentation will be made by Professor Hyland at the C.H.I.U. Plenary meeting on 5th April, 2004. The National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education disseminated a paper entitled “*Targeted Initiatives to Improve Access: Mapping the Present and Directions for the Future*” in February 2004. The two papers provide a framework for discussion by C.H.I.U. on sectoral initiatives to be taken by the universities.

The National Office has established an advisory group with representatives from the education community, social partners and learners. Professor Jim Browne, Registrar, NUIG has been nominated to represent C.H.I.U.

4.7 *Enterprise Strategy Group*

C.H.I.U. made a submission to the Enterprise Strategy Group on 9 March, 2004, a copy of the submission is on the C.H.I.U. website. Arrangements are being made for a follow-up meeting with members of the Enterprise Strategy Group.

5. *Communications Strategy*

C.H.I.U. Council has confirmed that for 2004 increasing investment in universities was the most important sectoral objective for universities and that making progress would require concerted action at a sectoral level. The Council identified the adoption and implementation of a clearly focused and co-ordinated communications strategy geared towards the advancement of agreed sectoral goals for increasing investment in universities as an imperative.

The Council agreed that the communications strategy should be a programme of combined public relations and lobbying activities with quantitative targets to be achieved in terms of media stories and articles, lobby sessions with politicians, social partners and policy influencers.

A paper on communications strategy was presented to the Council on 26th January, 2004 and subsequently in the light of discussion at the Council submitted a C.H.I.U. communications plan, which has been referred to the Council for agreement.

The plan made proposals for getting a higher profile for university issues in the media and media coverage has increased over the last few months. The plan proposes that C.H.I.U. representatives meet with key influencers and decision makers. Since the last C.H.I.U.

meeting lobbying meetings have been held with high level representatives of Forfás, IDA, Enterprise Ireland, SFI, Fine Gael, the Labour Party, Department of the Taoiseach, DETE and DES. Main points arising from the meetings are as follows:-

- General acceptance that the university sector has a key role to play in economic and social development,
- Case for increased investment in universities has to be backed by a coherent, significant and visible reform agenda and what the additional investment is required for has to be precisely articulated,
- Universities need to act cohesively and consistently as a sector,
- Universities have not been good at getting the story of their achievements across to politicians and the public,
- University leaders should constantly engage with politicians and policy makers and influencers to get their message across,
- Universities should not adopt a defensive approach to articulate their role or case for investment,
- Universities need to be able to demonstrate VFM convincingly,
- Acceptance that there is a clear need for joined up planning for higher education and research to live up to the rhetoric of the knowledge economy,
- The reality of politics was that the demands of constituents forced their attention on primary and post-primary issues,
- Performance of university staff is an issue on which assurance is required,
- While return of university fees was off the political agenda, an objective debate of all the issues involved could be constructive in the context of the need for increased investment in universities,
- Need to reform funding of universities to help universities become more innovative and responsive,
- There is need for a wide societal debate leading to a social consensus on the role of higher education in the knowledge society,
- The concentration in higher education has to move from quantity to quality.

The plan also emphasised the need for coordination of communications officers in each of the universities to ensure that local communications were on message with the agreed sectoral position on university funding. A meeting of Communicators Directors was held in C.H.I.U. on 27th January.

6. National Task Force on Undergraduate Medical Education

C.H.I.U. was formally invited to submit written proposals on the current and future operation of the undergraduate medical training system. To assist C.H.I.U. in this matter the Task Force identified the following key issues which it hoped would inform the C.H.I.U. response.

- The Strengths/Weaknesses of current system of undergraduate medical education and training,
- The Opportunities/Threats faced by the system,
- How the undergraduate medical education system impacts on/relates to your organisation?
- What are the main obstacles to progress and suggestions for improvement within the system?

The C.H.I.U. Council sought the views of the Registrars' Group on a submission made to the Task Force by the Deans of Medicine as an input to a C.H.I.U. position. DES sought views from C.H.I.U. on a UL proposal relating to the establishment of post graduate entry to medical education.

The Task Force has engaged Indecon Economic Consultants to undertake research to identify and measure existing resources being applied to the education and pre-registration training of doctors in Ireland and is seeking the assistance of universities in gathering relevant information.

7. Quality Assurance

7.1. EUA review of QA procedures.

The EUA review started on 20th January 2004 with a seminar held in the Davenport hotel preceded by a meeting on the 19th hosted by the IUQB and the HEA. In attendance were the EUA review teams, members of the EUA secretariat, Presidents, Registrars and Quality Officers of the universities, representatives of the HEA, NQAI and the Reference Panel established by the HEA. The seminar was opened by Bryan McMahon (IUQB), Don Thornhill (HEA) and Henrick Toft Jensen (EUA). Following presentations on behalf of EUA, C.H.I.U., HEA and IUQB the day was devoted to wide ranging discussions on the review process. Finally the dates for the Preliminary Visits by the Review Teams to the seven universities were agreed.

Following a proposal made at the meeting of the IUQB on 11 February 2004, and subsequent discussions between the IUQB, HEA and EUA, agreement was reached on the following revision of section 4 in the Terms of Reference of the EUA Review.

7.1.1. The University Reports

- The EUA will provide a draft report to each university for correction of factual errors. Universities will be allowed two weeks to notify the EUA of any corrections. Following this period the EUA will assume the university accepts the draft as the final report.
- The final reports are then sent to the IUQB, which then forwards to each university its individual report. Copies will also be sent by the IUQB to the HEA for noting, and with the proviso that it is work in progress.
- The IUQB will require a response to the report from each university within six weeks.
- The IUQB then prepares its own formal response to the reports and submits all these documents, i.e. the EUA reports, the university responses, and the IUQB response, as a package to the Minister (section 41 of the Universities Act).
- On completion of this process each university will publish its individual report on its website.

7.1.2. The Sectoral Report

- The EUA will send the draft sectoral report to IUQB and HEA for correction of errors of fact. The HEA and IUQB will co-ordinate their response on this and report back to the EUA very quickly.
- The EUA will then provide a final report to the HEA and the IUQB on its sector-wide review of quality procedures established by the universities. Following consideration of the EUA sectoral report and the 'reflections' document prepared by the high-level

reference panel, the HEA will publish the outcomes of the review following consultation with the IUQB.

- Following consideration of the EUA sectoral report the IUQB will publish its views on the outcome of the review, following consultation with the HEA.

The CEO has been invited to attend a meeting of the EUA Extended Steering Committee in Ljubljana, Slovenia on the 8th May 2004.

7.2. OECD Submission

The IUQB made a submission to the OECD Review of Higher Education in Ireland. A supplementary submission on QA issues was made by C.H.I.U. as a follow-up to discussions with the OECD Review Team.

7.3. IUQB

7.3.1. Board Meetings

The third meeting of the Board took place on 10/11 February 2004 in the C.H.I.U. Boardroom. In the absence of Judge McMahon the chair was taken by Jane Williams. The EUA review of quality procedures was discussed at length and a proposal was made on the arrangements for dealing with the EUA reports. This proposal was subsequently accepted by the EUA and the HEA (see 7.1 above). The timing of the publication of the OECD report was discussed and the possible effect of this on the IUQB response to the EUA reports. It was agreed that in order to maintain the integrity of the review process the IUQB response should be independent of the OECD report. There was an up-date by the CEO on the proposed application for membership of ENQA. Relations with professional bodies such as the Institution of Engineers of Ireland were discussed in the context of quality assurance and accreditation. The CEO outlined proposals for an IUQB action plan that had been proposed at the IUQB Executive meeting of the 26 January 2004. Following a detailed discussion it was agreed to establish a sub-committee of the Board entitled the 'Strategy Group' comprising Jane Williams, Liam Connellan, the four Registrars on the Board, and the CEO. The CEO was asked to arrange an early meeting of the group and to prepare a preliminary document for consideration at the first meeting.

The Board requested the CEO to write to Professor Jim Gosling, to thank him on behalf of the Board for his excellent organisation of the second annual IUQB conference held in NUI Galway on 6/7 February 2004. The next meeting of the Board will take place on 21/22 April, 2004.

7.3.2. Sectoral Projects

Work on the three sectoral projects *Student Support Services, Teaching and Learning in Mathematics, Administration of PhD Programmes* is well advanced and interim reports have been drafted.

Summary of interim reports

In all sectoral projects the following methodology is broadly followed, with allowance for variation due to the special nature and complexity of the individual projects, together with input from international experience:

- i. A series of meetings/workshops is held in each institution involving relevant university expert groups, to collect and analyse information and prepare a report.

- ii. A synthesis of these reports is prepared and sent to each university for consideration and refinement by the expert groups. Subsequently one or more national meetings/workshops are held to agree a common approach.
- iii. Conference with international experts is organised.
- iv. Preparation and publication of manuals is agreed by universities as code of best practice.

Student Support Services

This project has broadly followed the agreed methodology, with a strong input from the EUA quality project 2002/2003 especially with regard to the principles for the delivery of Student Support Services (SSS) and the categories suggested in that project.

Each University applied these principles and conducted a SWOT analysis of the services. This information was summarised and circulated to all the Universities. A meeting of representatives of all the SSS providers was then held in C.H.I.U. and it was agreed that each University would hold an internal seminar to refine the information and to make suggestions for the future of the project. The following actions have been identified:

- Set up an inter-university SSS network which would operate under the auspices of C.H.I.U.
- Draw up a sectoral statement that makes the case for the vital importance of the provision of SSS
- Formulate strategies that will embed SSS into the core of the Universities' missions
- Identify standards and performance indicators
- Formulate strategies for the creation of internal cohesion between the various student support services within institutions

There will be a further meeting of this group at the end of March 2004 in UCD (after some universities hold internal seminars) to plan for progressing the project. The aspiration is to produce a framework document and hold an international symposium. This occasion could herald the launch of the document and of the proposed network.

Mathematics Teaching and Learning

The agreed methodology has been followed. The local expert groups included mathematicians and representatives of teaching and learning centres. The individual university reports have been completed and a summary of these has been prepared and distributed to the expert groups. The following key issues have been identified, and will be discussed, at a national workshop in Dublin on the 31 March/1 April 2004.

- Transition from school to university
- Teaching and learning styles
- Tutorials
- Student feedback
- Assessment
- Staff development
- Sharing of good practice across the sector

An international seminar/workshop is planned for early summer 2004 with publication of a best practice manual to follow.

Administration of PhD Programmes

The agreed methodology has been followed. The project also received additional funding from the two Irish Research Councils (for Science, Engineering & Technology and Humanities and Social Sciences). Each university held a workshop in late 2003, which included academic, administrative and student participants. The individual university reports have been completed and a summary of these has been prepared. An interim report on the Project will be completed by the end of March 2004. The report will include the summary reports of the individual university workshops and also the following:

- A comprehensive matrix of the organisational structure of PhD programmes in the seven Irish Universities
- Data on the following (at both institutional and Faculty level) for the seven Irish Universities for the three years 2001, 2002 and 2003
 - The number of Registered PhD and Masters (by Research Students)
 - The number of students graduating with PhD and Masters (by research) degrees
 - The mean completion time of PhD students

A workshop, (to which 140 participants have been invited) will take place on 29th April 2004 in Dublin. This will feature presentations on international practice in the organisation of PhD programmes in Sweden, France, the UK and the USA, as well as Ireland. The workshop will also feature breakout sessions on:

- Supervision and monitoring processes
- Training of supervisors and examiners
- Training for subject-appropriate generic skills for PhD students
- Submission format and the PhD examination

The publication of a best practice manual will follow in the summer of 2004.

7.4. Irish Higher Education Quality Network

At the meeting of the IHEQN on 13 February 2004 the IUQB representatives presented a paper on the basic principles underpinning quality assurance/quality improvement activity in the universities, based on the legislation and as outlined in the Framework Publication. It was agreed that DIT and the IoTs would present papers on their basic QA principles at the next meeting. When consensus has been reached discussion will begin on principles governing operational procedures in the conduct of reviews.

7.5. Second IUQB International Conference

The Second IUQB International Conference was held in the National University of Ireland Galway on 6th/7th February, 2004 and was entitled “*Learning in the Europe of Knowledge*”. This was a joint EUA-IUQB conference organised by Professor Jim Gosling in the context of the Irish Presidency of the EU. Presenters included experts from Ireland and around the world. The IUQB has expressed its appreciation and thanks to Professor Gosling for an excellent conference. The Minister for Education and Science addressed the conference.

7.6. Consultation / Networking

The CEO was invited to visit the HRB to explain the QA/QI System in place in Irish universities and to advise the HRB on their QA procedures. He represented the IUQB at:

- The 7th European Student Convention, *National Qualifications Framework and Student Involvement within the European Higher Education Area* organised by ESIB and held in Dublin Castle from 10-13th February 2004.

- The NQAI conference *Towards 2010: Common Themes and approaches in European Developments across Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training* held as part of the Irish presidency in Dublin Castle on 8th March 2004.
- As part of the strategy to build the profile of IUQB CEO served as a member of the EUA review team on the Preliminary Visit to the University of Vilnius on 4-7th March, 2004.

7.7. *IUQB Secretariat*

The Secretariat has now taken up office at 11 Merrion Square, Dublin 2. The Programme Manager and an administrator have been appointed and are both in place. The administrator services are being shared with Expertise Ireland.

8. International

8.1. *EU and Bologna Process*

The European Commission issued a paper on 17th February, 2004 entitled “*From Berlin to Bergen – The EU Contribution*”. The paper sets out the EU Contribution to the Bologna Process provided by the European Commission in partnership with the higher education sector and supported through the Socrates Programme. The paper describes the Commission contribution to the realisation of the three intermediate priorities defined in Berlin: quality assurance, two-cycle system and recognition of degrees and periods of study. Also covered are Commission initiatives on promoting mobility, raising the attractiveness of European higher education and developing the doctoral phase (EHEA-ERA).

8.2. *Diploma Supplement*

Following agreement on a national template for the Diploma Supplement, and Guidelines for its use, the Minister launched a pilot implementation project involving DCU, DIT and Letterkenny IoT on 20th February 2004.

Debate has continued on the possibility of including a so-called ‘ECTS grade’ in the Diploma Supplement issued by the universities. The Registrars of the universities have agreed that the inclusion of an ECTS grade is important for students, but have rejected the norm-based methodology for the calculation of the grade suggested by the ECTS National Co-ordinators (a group organised by the EUA under contract to the EC). Instead they have provisionally agreed to translate the standard honours grades 1, 2.1, 2.2, 3, pass to A, B, C, D, E respectively.

8.3. *Lisbon Strategy and Education & Training*

The Council of the European Union and the European Commission submitted a joint report to the European Council on 25/26 March, 2004 entitled “*Education & Training 2010 – The Success of the Lisbon Strategy Hangs on Urgent Reforms*”. The report emphasises that higher education is central to the Europe of Knowledge and that the role of higher education in the Lisbon Strategy goes beyond the programme of reforms initiated by the Bologna Process. The role of universities comprehended by the Lisbon Strategy “covers areas as diverse and as vital as the training of teachers and that of the future of researchers, their mobility within the European Union, the place of culture, science and European values in the world, an outward-looking approach to the business sector, the regions and society in general, the incorporation of the social and citizen-focused dimensions in courses”.

It also draws attention to the under-investment in the European higher education sector in comparison with the US where expenditure on higher education is “between two and five times more per student than EU countries”.

8.4. *A new integrated programme for Education and Training in Europe, 2007-2013*

The European Commission presented a new communication in March on the future of its funding tools in the field of Education and Training for 2007-2013 (the current Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes will expire in 2006). It proposes to regroup its current activities in two frames:

- a single and unique **integrated programme** for education and lifelong learning for the Members States, EFTA countries and the candidate countries.
- **Tempus Plus**, which will address the needs of neighbour States of the EU and any country already taking part in Tempus.

The integrated programme will be structured along four sectoral programmes (Erasmus, Comenius, Grundtvig and Leonardo), a transversal programme focusing on policy development, language learning, information and communications technologies and dissemination and an expanded Jean Monnet programme including the current Jean Monnet actions and the support to European organisations in the field of Education and Training. Its main objectives are to support mobility and institutions. It also takes into account the objectives set for the establishment of a knowledge-based society (Lisbon process), the European Higher Education and Research Area (Bologna process) and an enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training (Copenhagen process).

Based on this text, the European Commission will present the legislative proposals corresponding to the new integrated programme and Tempus Plus for discussion by the Parliament this summer.

In addition it should be noted that:

- Greater decentralisation is expected: 80% of the programme should be managed at national level.
- Erasmus Mundus will remain a separate funding tool, which will last, in its first phase, until 2008.
- The Commission has released, in parallel with its communication, interim evaluation reports for each of the existing programmes.

8.5. *EUA*

UCD Workshop

The two-day EUA workshop entitled "*Human Resource Policies in Universities*" which took place on 27-28 February in UCD, brought together 95 participants from 25 countries across Europe. A great number of positions and titles, reflecting the different organisational approaches found in European universities regarding their Human Resource Management, were represented at the workshop. The results of the work groups as well as the cases and presentations are now available on the EUA website – www.eua.be/eua/en/membership_community_Dublin.jsp

An EUA Council meeting was held in Marseille, France, on 1st April, 2004 in conjunction with an EUA Conference and General Assembly. The title of the Conference was

Universities and Society: Engaging Stakeholders and was attended by C.H.I.U. Chair, Dr. Wrixon.

An EUA management seminar "*Leadership and Strategic Management of Universities*" will be held on 16-21 April 2004, in Cork.

9. NQAI

The Registrars' Group decided that a publication setting out the implications of the National Framework of Qualifications for the universities should be prepared and issued by C.H.I.U. They decided to commission the development of the publication as a separate project and to consult with the NQAI in the course of the work.

10. NCCA

The NCCA launched a discussion paper – *Languages in the Post Primary Curriculum*. The paper and the consultation process initiated by the NCCA will be of interest to the universities and in particular languages departments. The full report is available on the NCCA website – www.ncca.ie

The development of the curriculum for Social, Personal and Health Education at senior cycle is being progressed in the light of responses to the discussion paper issued on the topic. A draft "*Curriculum Framework for Senior Cycle*" for religious education, a draft syllabus for Leaving Certificate Art, a draft syllabus for Leaving Certificate Economics and a draft document on Latin and Classical Studies at Post-Primary level are being considered by the NCCA.

The NCCA has engaged in a consultation process on its Directions for Development booklet [CR.03/4] launched at the Forum on Senior Cycle Education in September 2003. Based on the outcomes of the process, it is currently preparing planning proposals for the next steps in achieving senior cycle reform.

11. Erosion of the Post-Primary Student Tuition Year

The Registrars considered the outcome of a meeting between representatives of their Group and representatives of the management bodies for post-primary schools, held to discuss proposals to combat the erosion of the student tuition year. A letter outlining the position of the universities in relation to Open Days was sent to the management bodies.

12. Official Languages Act, 2003

In correspondence with the Secretary of TCD, the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs has clarified how the Official Languages Act, 2003 will be implemented. The Department pointed out that there are two provisions of the Act which have been commenced and have a direct effect on public bodies. The first confirms the right of a person to correspond with a public body in the Irish Language and receive a reply in that language. The second, Section 10, takes effect on 1st May, 2004 and requires that annual reports and accounts prepared by public bodies must be published simultaneously in both official languages.

13. Copyright

The Copyright Working Group, in January, recommended acceptance by universities of the higher education licence that the Group had negotiated with ICLA [CR04/1, par.14]. The Secretaries Group considered the draft ICLA Licence Agreement at its meeting on 26th January and they raised a number of issues which have been brought to the attention of the Copyright Working Group:-

In the meantime, ICLA has informed the Chair of the C.H.I.U. Copyright Working Group that ICLA is unlikely to be in a position during the academic year 2003/04 to extend their digital licence to Irish universities and IOTs due to delays in agreement being reached between the UK Higher Education Sector and the CLA. The papers have been referred to C.H.I.U. Solicitors for advice.