

**C.H.I.U. Review [04/1] for C.H.I.U. Meetings
On 26th January, 2004 in University College Cork**

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1. Research

1.1 *Research Strategy*

The Vice Presidents/Deans of Research have been working on a research strategy for the University sector since early 2003. The result is a strategy document that was circulated to the Heads in December 2003. The two proposals contained in this document focus on two issues, training of researchers and establishing a research career within the Universities. The first proposal centres on the creation of a national **School for Training of Advanced Researchers (STAR)**, the objectives being research training for PhD and postdoctoral researchers of the highest quality through the pooling of resources and the creation of critical mass for excellence at both a thematic and multidisciplinary level. STAR would not be a “physical” space, but rather a virtual institute, providing training throughout the country. Students need access to specialised training in areas relevant to their research and there may be only one or two institutions with the relevant in-house skills to provide this. The objective of STAR is that access to these facilities would be offered to students from all of the universities. The structure of coordinated programmes of training in broad-based skills could be developed at a national level and delivered within each institution.

The second proposal is the introduction of a **Researcher Career** within the universities. It is based on the following principles:

- The creation of a number of fixed term researcher contracts for 5 years
- Ensuring a parity of esteem between the long-term contract researcher and permanent academic staff
- Funding these posts through their participation in a nationwide graduate school and income from research grants

It is expected that researchers entering this career instrument would already have demonstrated their research capabilities and have a number of years of postdoctoral experience appropriate to their field. A five year contract will give them stability of funding in order to develop their area of research and, for example, build a research team. It will also give them a period to compete for national and international research funding. It is important that people on this career path have parity of esteem with academic staff in the department or centre where they are located. They should be fully involved in all decisions relating to research. Part of their responsibilities will be to be actively involved in teaching and supervision at postgraduate level and in particular spend a portion of their time teaching at postgraduate level. This would mean that they would be a significant part of the teaching staff in the national **School for Training of Advanced Researchers (STAR)**.

The document will require consideration by other C.H.I.U. groups to ensure that all relevant academic, financial and human resource implications are taken into account. The audience for the final policy document will be the key decision-makers who control and

influence the investment of funds for research. It is intended to develop this document to produce a robust and visionary statement by the Irish universities.

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. There is a clear need to approach the HEA and Forfás (who commissioned the report) to act on its recommendations. The first key step is to establish a Group that will oversee the implementation of the recommendations of the report.

1.3. *European Research Area/Irish Presidency 2004*

The Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment have planned events over the 6 months of the Irish Presidency of the EU. As its incoming president, Tánaiste Mary Harney, TD, has set the agenda for the Competitiveness Council under the Irish Presidency, with a focus on achieving the goals of the Lisbon strategy. Within this wider objective, the Irish Presidency pledges to make progress in areas such as researcher mobility, intellectual property rights, research infrastructures, and advancing the European Research Area (ERA). The Irish Presidency states that it attaches great importance to advancing the creation of the ERA. To achieve this, however, it argues that a 'step change' is needed in the research and innovation performance of European enterprise. To realise such a step change, the Presidency commits itself to reaching the 3% target for research investment. However, it stresses that 'this investment must show benefits for people and society.'

Another vital element in stimulating the research and innovation performance of European industry, according to the Presidency position paper, is the mobility of researchers. The Competitiveness Council will seek to progress a range of issues, including the regulatory/legislative issues involved in the field of entry and residence of third country researchers. Other areas such as the recognition of qualifications and clear rules on the rights of residence will also be addressed.

The Irish Presidency recognises that the Community Patent is important for industry, and must be made available to firms at a reasonable cost. It therefore pledges to 'make every effort to ensure its adoption.' It also highlights the importance of the directive on the enforcement of intellectual property rights and promises to make every effort to achieve a common position within the Council.

Other issues singled out as priorities include research infrastructures, where it is stated that 'a European approach is required, given the levels of funding involved and strategic requirements between individual Member States.' Particular attention will also be paid to the industrial exploitation of research carried out in the field of nanotechnology.

1.3.1. *Conference on Research Excellence*

Over the past year there has been a strong lobby from the European science community to establish a European Research Council (ERC) to fund basic research. The Commission is now taking the lead on this topic and has asked DETE to organise a 2 day event on 16/17th February to discuss this in detail. Effectively the Commission is planning to propose a fund under FP7 of about €2bn per annum to fund basic research at a European level. The

source of funds to support this programme will come from other sectors of the Commission budget and will not be top sliced from national research funding agencies.

1.3.2. *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. The final draft of the report and recommendations is expected at the end of January

1.4. *Science Foundation Ireland*

Awards worth over €9 million have been approved by Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) in 2003. This brings to over €320 million, the investment commitments made by SFI since 2001, to support, in Ireland, over 750 world-class researchers working in the fields underpinning Biotechnology (BioT) and Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

Two highly significant awards for the funding of new SFI Centres for Science, Engineering and Technology (CSET) have been made. A CSET Award of €15 million has been approved for NUI Galway for the establishment of the Regenerative Medicine Institute (REMEDI). Regenerative Medicine is an emerging discipline that will be used to repair tissues and organs and promises to partially replace current conventional medicine with its reliance on invasive techniques. Industry partners will include Medtronic Vascular (Galway). The REMEDI CSET will play a vital role in embedding high value added R&D research activities in Ireland and will sustain the future growth of Biotechnology firms in the country.

The second award of €10m is for a CSET at TCD in partnership with UCC and UCD. The Centre for Research on Adaptive Nanostructures and Nanodevices (CRANN) will develop tools and techniques to build new structures and devices atom by atom with endless possibilities for BioT and ICT. Examples of the impact of this technology include next generation microelectronics technologies and new drug delivery systems. The CRANN CSET's principal industry partner is Intel Ireland Ltd. TCD will also receive a further €1 million for the provision of a specialised nanoscience research facility to be used by Nanoscience Investigators at TCD. This facility will meet the environmental and vibration standards required for cutting edge nanoscience research.

1.4.1 *Basic Research Grants*

Following the deadline of 9th January, SFI has received over 650 proposals for Basic Research Grants. Over 2000 reviewers worldwide have agreed to evaluate the proposals (each will be reviewed by 3 experts in the relevant field). SFI are establishing around 20 disciplinary panels, with a mix of national and international members, chaired by Irish academics (North and South) that will make funding recommendations to SFI. The results of the evaluations are expected in early April.

1.4.2 *“Young Investigator” Award*

The C.H.I.U. Research Office is currently working with SFI to create a highly prestigious five year award to enable outstanding recent PhD graduates develop their research careers.

1.5. IRCSET

1.5.1. 2004 Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme

Applications for funding under the Embark Initiative's 2004 postdoctoral fellowship scheme are now open. The closing date for receipt of applications is 27th February, 2004. Up to 40 awards will be offered.

1.5.2. Significant Scientific Research Collaboration Agreement

The Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology (IRCSET) and The French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) have signed a significant scientific research collaboration agreement. The agreement announced today will foster the development of exchanges between the Irish and French scientific communities. It will promote the mobility of researchers, the organisation of meetings, the joint use of labs and encourage submission to joint calls for proposals. Researchers will be in a position to fully take advantage of the possibilities offered by each organisation in bilateral and multilateral contexts.

1.6. Enterprise Ireland

1.6.1 EI/C.H.I.U. Liaison Group

This Group works very successfully at a high level with Feargal O'Morain (EI Director Science & Innovation) on Intellectual Property/Technology Transfer/Commercialisation. In 2003 a Patent Fund was agreed that is expected to launch by the end of the month. Planning for 2004 includes, the resourcing of Technology Transfer Offices and standard conditions on Intellectual Property for all publicly funded research.

C.H.I.U. Group Members are:

Prof. K. Collins, VP Research UCC (Chair)

Prof. J. Twamley, VP Research NUI-Maynooth

Dr. P. Frain, Director NOVA UCD

Dr. E. O'Neill, Director Innovation Centre TCD

Dr. C. O'Carroll, C.H.I.U.

1.6.2. European Young Investigators Award (EURYI)

About 40 proposals were received from a wide variety of disciplines from Engineering to Humanities. Two proposals will be selected to go forward to the European competition, <http://www.enterprise-ireland.com/services-details.asp?section=industry&subsection=industry-support&id=27>.

1.7. Irish Council for Science Technology and Innovation (ICSTI)

The main focus of ICSTI in 2003 was the development of a National Code of Practice on Intellectual Property for publicly funded research. This has now been finalised and will be published by the end of the month. C.H.I.U. has been fully involved in the process through the Vice Presidents/Deans of Research and ILO Groups.

In 2004 ICSTI are planning to develop a National Code of Practice on Intellectual Property generated from mixed public/private funded research.

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 (342), UCD (408), NUI Maynooth (74) and QUB (41), UCC (2), UL (42) and UU (28). The development of the portal is fully supported by IBEC and

DETE as the means to provide access to Irish research expertise to industry. The Belfast launch will take place on 10th February, 2004. A South-West launch is being planned for Cork in late February but is dependant on much greater data presence on the portal from the region. The European launch by the Tánaiste is planned for May.

1.9. EU Sixth Framework Programme

1.9.1 FP6 Legal, Financial and Contractual Issues

The complexity of FP6 in terms of legal and financial matters has a significant bearing on the Universities in terms of resources and cost. In order to facilitate discussion and address issues relating to this matter, the Research Office has initiated a forum to deal with sectoral concerns.

1.9.2. Human Resources & Mobility Programme

In FP5, the Marie Curie Programme accounted for approximately €25m over four years, representing around 20% of the total Irish take (€15m) from that programme. Given that it was only 7% of the FP5 budget this was an excellent result. This has now been surpassed in the first round of FP6 with a take of **€1.5m** (minimum) from a total available Marie Curie budget of €350m. This represents 3.3% of the budget and clearly well more than our "juste retour". ***Irish success rates in the most competitive programmes were well above our European competitors.*** For example, in the programme to train PhD students the overall success rate was 7% whereas the Irish success rate was 18%, our closest rival, the UK, was only 11%. **We are convinced that this very high success rate is directly due to the high level of support that the C.H.I.U. Research Office offers to applicants in helping them write proposals.**

A small number of companies applied in the first round with one notable success. Aughinish Alumina in Askeaton have secured a grant (Marie Curie Transfer of Knowledge Fellowship) worth about €1.7m that will allow them, with UL, to collaborate with Curtin University and the AJ Parker Institute in Perth, Western Australia. Indeed, in this particular Marie Curie scheme, 6 out of 7 Irish proposals were funded. We are actively working with IBEC, IDA and EI to promote these programmes to companies as they provide easy entry to FP6, with the majority of Marie Curie schemes not requiring partners and have a corresponding low level of admin. We are already in direct negotiation with a number of Irish and US multinationals, many in collaboration with Irish universities, with a view to supporting them in writing proposals for the second round in 2004.

1.9.3. European Network of Mobility Centres

The Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment has given responsibility to C.H.I.U. to set up a dedicated support service in Ireland with the objective of providing advice to researchers coming into the country. C.H.I.U.'s submitted proposal -"CAIRDE"- to the European Commission for financial support for this initiative has been favourably evaluated, with an estimated EC contribution of €200000 and the Research Office is currently negotiating the contract. CAIRDE will consist of a dedicated central office in C.H.I.U. and a distributed network of experts throughout the universities.

2. University Funding

2.1. FGS Funding Paper

The FGS Paper, “*The Funding of the Irish University Sector*”, was published and launched at a press conference held in C.H.I.U. offices. The report received wide coverage in the newspapers and on radio and TV. It was circulated widely to Ministers, politicians, civil servants, social partners and chief executives of key state agencies. The report has also been forwarded to the OECD Team conducting the review of Irish higher education.

2.2. PRTL Cycle 3

Minister Dempsey announced the ending of the “pause” on PRTL Cycle 3 funding on 7th November 2003. This followed sustained media coverage of the C.H.I.U. argument that increased investment in universities was a key requirement for the development of a knowledge economy which intensified following the release of the FGS Report. The announcement seems to have been made in a rush in advance of the Estimates for reasons related to internal government politics.

It is not clear when clearance for projects will be given and to what extent it is intended to meet outstanding payments in respect of inflation costs and S843 shortfalls. The level of provision for 2004 and the proposed phasing over 5 years does not match the demand for immediate provision of facilities.

2.3. Recurrent Funding 2004

The Minister for Education and Science announced the Education Estimates at a briefing on 13th November, 2003 which revealed a 0% increase in recurrent funding for universities over 2003 [copy of C.H.I.U. The C.H.I.U. Chair wrote to the Minister on 18th November seeking a meeting and received a reply dated 25th November. The Minister made it clear in the briefing and subsequently at the C.H.I.U. meeting with him on 17th December 2003 that he expects the universities to meet Benchmarking, Sustaining Progress and other pay costs from within the 2004 Estimates allocation. He also made it clear at that meeting that the 2004 allocation for universities had been his decision made in the context of an overall 13% increase in the 2004 Education Estimates. C.H.I.U. issued a press statement following the meeting.

The HEA issued grant allocation letters to the universities on 26th November, 2003 which formally advised them of the HEA’s intention to review the universities’ financial positions. It is understood that the HEA will be appointing an examiner to undertake a detailed review of the financial statements focusing on university financial resources.

It is clear from the meeting with the Minister that he does not consider that universities operate in the most cost effective ways possible and that they do not rigorously pursue a VFM approach to their operations. An important part of a strategy to convince government that universities require increased funding will be to demonstrate that there is no fat in the system, that they are efficient and effective in their use of financial resources and that they do provide VFM.

2.4. Capital Funding 2004

The capital provision for universities and other HEA designated institutions announced in the Estimates 2004 is €20m. This is represented as a reduction of 45% from €36m in 2003. In fact the original estimate for 2003 was €51m so the 2004 provision represents a

60% + cut. However the €51m in 2003, a reduction on the 2002 figure of 24%, flattered to deceive. It was cut twice by the Minister and the final 2003 figure is of the order of €14m. The position has not been helped by the inability of the universities to formulate or agree a sectoral programme for infrastructural development. Universities have traditionally relied on unco-ordinated proposals for projects by individual universities to win capital funding.

The 2003 provision is extremely tight with commitments on medical therapies projects to be met, funding on skills projects to be paid and a number of strategically important projects for individual universities awaiting funding approval. It is unlikely that any real progress will be possible in securing realistic levels of state investment for university infrastructure pending the results of the Kelly Capital Review and the OECD Review.

2.5. *Availability of Information and Statistics*

On 2nd December, the HEA wrote to all universities advising of a Government decision in July 2003 that all Departments would report staff numbers on a quarterly basis. The first statistical return was sought as at 19th December. The Minister subsequently noted at the meeting on 17th December that the HEA had failed to obtain and provide staff statistical information from the universities. The inability of the universities to provide comparable financial and other data for the formulation of sectoral positions consistently undermines the capacity of C.H.I.U. to present convincing cases on behalf of the sector.

Consolidated financial reporting of university activities: As noted under section 3.3 below, university financial activities are to be reported on a consolidated basis for the first time as of 30th September 2003. The financial report will include all activities carried out by the university including those which are self-financing. External perceptions of universities' financial positions are likely to be informed by the new reporting format once available. While these perceptions should take account of the principles of transparency, accountability and good practice inherent in the new approach, it is of key importance that financial information should be placed in context and the universities should seek to be proactive at a sectoral and institutional level to ensure that this is the case.

2005 budget information: C.H.I.U. has stated to the Minister and HEA/DES that any available resources are being channelled towards meeting the shortfall in 2004 university budgets. This action can only be taken on a once-off basis and will not even enable all universities to break even. Therefore should further cuts be imposed in 2005, it will be impossible for them not to have a serious impact on the provision of services to students. It is imperative that all university officers consider the potential impact of such a situation during 2004 and work with C.H.I.U. to ensure that a credible, substantiated and persuasive case can be made to the Minister, HEA/DES and the media as required on an ongoing basis.

2.6. *Tuition Fees*

Further to developments reported in the C.H.I.U. Review [20.10.03], the debate on the possible reintroduction of tuition fees continued in the media. In November, HEA Chairman addressed an NUI conference and expanded on a proposal he had made at an RIA workshop on 6th October, 2003 that tuition fees could be paid by fourth year students. He broadened the context of the issue by stating that it was "*unlikely that Ireland will be able to sustain internationally competitive third-level institutions without*

private funding". This led to an Irish Times editorial calling for the fee issue to be re-examined in the context of the Third Level sector's overall funding needs.

The alleged DES proposal to significantly increase the student services charge did not materialise. However on 13th November, the Minister announced a unilateral increase in the charge by €80 to €750 with further implications for universities in seeking to determine the increase in fee income for 2004/05.

2.7. Section 50 - Capital Funding

A C.H.I.U. Section 50 submission to the Minister for Finance seeking an amendment to facilitate student accommodation projects in progress, was made in November 2003. The Minister for Finance subsequently announced in the Budget on 3rd December that the scheme would be extended to 31st July 2006.

2.8. Targeted Funding 2003

Targeted funding of €8.8m [2002: €12.4m] was allocated in December 2003, a reduction of 29%. In June 2003, the HEA had advised the universities that funding would be restricted for new proposals and that it would be targeted towards approved initiatives in progress, rather than towards new initiatives. The funding allocations reflect this approach. 55% of the funding was provided for access programmes, 14% for Irish language initiatives and 10% for student retention. All areas received reduced funding over 2002 levels with the exception of support for teaching (+19%) and student retention (+28%).

2.9. HEA Recurrent Funding Model Review

UCFOG is awaiting a consultation paper from the HEA.

2.10. Shortfall on ESF Undergraduate Skills Programmes

As reported in the C.H.I.U. Review [03.4] there has been a downturn in student numbers enrolling in skills courses. In many cases student numbers have been well below the quota numbers agreed with the HEA resulting in increasing recurrent funding gaps being subsidised by the universities. A submission was made to the HEA on 7th November setting out the case for additional funding. The estimated shortfall in funding under the Skills Programme was €6.8m. The HEA indicated that while the universities' case was appreciated, only limited funding was available and allocations totalling €1.15m were made in December 2003.

A new issue has been raised in relation to the funding levels allocated in respect of Skills Programmes for 2003/04. Further information is being sought and UCFOG will consider the matter on 26th January.

2.11. Pensions Issues

Universities Act Section 25 (7) – Universities Superannuation Scheme: A draft scheme has been under consideration by the C.H.I.U. Working Group on Pensions (composed of HR and Finance Officers) since September 2003. Developments were advised by UCFOG to the HEA at their meeting on 8th October, with the HEA noting that a meeting was being sought with DES on pension issues. On 18th December 2003, the HEA wrote to the universities seeking submission of a new scheme (based on the model scheme for state sponsored bodies) which would apply from January 2004 and which it was intended would be adopted prior to agreement on certain terms of the scheme such as

added years. There was no reference to the due process / timeframe required for adoption and implementation of the new scheme or to the key funding issue of who carries ultimate responsibility for pension liabilities which has been raised with the HEA. A meeting of the Working Group on 20th January is to consider an appropriate response to the HEA's letter together with the next steps to be taken.

Funding of pension schemes: The HEA stated in the 2004 core grant allocation letter (26.11.03), that "*in the light of the exceptional circumstances...this year.....to urgently review the overall financial position...including... pension funds.* As noted above, the issue of responsibility for liabilities is still to be addressed. At the meeting on 8th October, the HEA were requested by UCFOG to review the current funding arrangements on the basis that the contribution level of 15% would need to significantly increase to meet core and supplementary funding requirements. UCFOG noted that the application of the Public Sector Transfer Scheme Member list would also need to be reviewed arising from the above also.

Changes to Public Service Pension Schemes 1st April 2004: In his 2004 budget, the Minister for Finance introduced a number of changes including the following: compulsory retirement at 65 would no longer be required and the minimum pension age would be increased to 65.

2.12. Nursing

The proposed commencement of capital funding allocations for therapies should ameliorate progress on integrated building projects with Nursing.

Following concerns noted about 2003/04 recurrent funding levels, the Chair of the C.H.I.U. Taskforce on Nursing wrote to the Department of Health and Children on 10th November 2003 setting out the key issues. The Department sought information on staff benchmarking costs with a view to making a specific allocation and the required detail was provided on 20th November. However it does not appear to date that any funding has been provided and this is being pursued by C.H.I.U. Funding in respect of 2004 benchmarking and Sustaining Progress awards remains to be addressed also.

A Liaison Group composed of a university representative (Pensions Manager, UCC) C.H.I.U., Department of Health & Children and Mercer Human Resource Consulting, has been set up to expedite the process of gathering employment information on nurse tutors which will facilitate costing of pension entitlements on transfer to the universities. Initial meetings were held on 30th October and 28th November, 2003.

2.13. Taxation changes - New Benefit in Kind provisions from 1st January 2004

As reported previously, benefits in kind provided to employees are taxable at source and subject to PRSI and the health levy since 1st January 2004.

3. HEA Issues

3.1. HEA New Secretary/Chief Executive

Mr. Tom Boland has been appointed as Secretary/Chief Executive of the HEA to replace Mr. John Hayden who has retired. Mr. Boland previously served as legal advisor in DES.

3.2. HEA Review of Equality Policies

The Equality Review Team appointed by the HEA submitted a report to the HEA in July 2003. The HEA has sought views from the universities on the report and it is understood that the HEA will publish the report with a HEA commentary. The Report addressed the following recommendations to C.H.I.U. –

- *Effective action needs to be taken by the universities to deal with the gender imbalance in higher staff positions. This issue should be a standing item on the agenda of C.H.I.U.*

3.3. University Financial Reporting – Adoption of Consolidated Format from 30.9.03

Preparations for reporting of university activities on a consolidated basis (to include all subsidiary companies) are continuing. The Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) has finally indicated an overall satisfaction with the approach adopted. A number of issues are still under discussion with the HEA and it is hoped to agree the majority of them prior to meeting with the C&AG's representative.

Two of the key issues remaining require HEA/DES determination:

- 1) who is responsible for university pension liabilities, and
- 2) clarification of the basis upon which a funding deficit has been incurred under the terms of Section 37 of the Universities Act.

External perceptions of universities' financial positions are likely to be informed by the new reporting format once available and the manner in which these can be managed and placed in context by the sector, remains to be considered.

3.4 EU Fees Policy – Definition of an EU Student

The provisions of the C.H.I.U. recommended definition of an EU undergraduate student have been adopted by the universities and the HEA. The issue of a student's fee status on progression to postgraduate level is to be considered by the Registrars' Group.

4. Future Strategy / Policy

4.1. OECD Review of Irish Higher Education

The OECD Review Team, by newspaper advertisement, has requested submissions from interested parties by 31st January, 2004. The invitation dated 19th December, 2003 seeks to limit submission to 2500 words/5 pages and to have them conform to the following six headings in the OECD Teams terms of reference:-

- Role of Higher Education
- Strategic Management and Structure
- Teaching and Learning
- Research and Development
- Investment and Financing
- International Competitiveness

The Review Team has sought a meeting with C.H.I.U. Council on 17th February, 2004 and has scheduled visits to UCD, UCC and UL on 18th, 24th and 25th February, 2004 respectively. At the C.H.I.U. meeting with Minister Dempsey the Minister said that he

expected a draft OECD Report to be available to the Dept during the summer with publication expected in November, 2004.

4.2. C.H.I.U. Strategy Process

With an eye to the OECD Review and with the intention of formulating sectoral positions from progress made in the C.H.I.U. strategy process C.H.I.U. Council has engaged Mr. Paddy Teahon as a consultant. To assist in the task of preparing positions on key issues the Council has appointed a Strategy Task Force comprising nominees of each of the Council Members. It is intended that their deliberations will feed into preparation of submissions and presentations to the OECD Review Team. Membership of the Task Force is as follows:

Michael Sullivan, UCC (Chair); Martin Conry, DCU; Sheila Greene, TCD; Jim Browne, NUIG; Frank Mulligan, NUIM; Jeff Windberger, UCD; John O'Connor, UL; Conor O'Carroll, C.H.I.U.; Michael McGrath, C.H.I.U.

A meeting was held on 13th January, 2004 and draft C.H.I.U. submission to the OECD Review team is being prepared for consideration by the Council.

4.3. DES Statement of Strategy 2003-2005

The DES published its Statement of Strategy in which it gives very little prominence to higher education. The statements set out a number of high level goals and related objectives and strategies. Most relevant to universities are –

Goal 2: Supporting an Inclusive Society

Objective 2.5: We will promote greater equity of access to third level

Goal 3: Contributing to Economic Prosperity

Objective 3.1: Promote the contribution of the third level sector to economic social development.

Goal 4: Improving Standards and Quality

Objective 4.2: Support the development of a qualifications framework

Objective 4.3: Support excellence in the quality of academic teaching and learning in higher education.

4.4. Recent OECD Reviews

In considering the matter of the OECD Review of Irish Higher Education, the universities would be advised to familiarise themselves with current OECD thinking on what are the key issues to be addressed in the reform of tertiary education. The following issues emerge from recent OECD reports – *Tertiary Education in Switzerland* and *Education Policy Analysis* –

- greater permeability in access rates and qualifications
- strengthened efforts to promote the participation of young adults from under-represented groups
- upgrading and integration of teacher education and health education
- development of bachelors degree as a distinct qualifications; pathways and qualifications need to be conceived as components of a linked coherent complementary range of tertiary education options

- adaptations in pedagogy to respond to the widening diversity of backgrounds, talents and pathways of students,
- strengthening further research and teaching in the social sciences and incorporating cross-disciplinary dimensions,
- strengthening further the social and cross-disciplinary dimensions of research activity,
- professional education and training should be conceived in new ways and boosted through new policies fostering wide partnership,
- extending the internationalisation of tertiary education to teaching and curricula,
- strategies for international recruitment, exchange and engagement of university staff in a global perspective should be widened,
- improve working and employment conditions of junior and middle rank staff
- further strengthening of nationwide co-ordination of HE,
- forstering the margin for decision making and capacities for decision making at senior management level in universities
- widening the scope to draw in private sector initiative,
- substantial improvement in the knowledge-base of higher education to support and inform decision making
- HE institutions need to develop clear organisational strategies backed by decisive and co-ordinated implementation
- governance of HE needs to develop a fusion of academic mission and executive capacity rather than substitute one for the other,
- for governments, the art of policy making will in future involve ensuring that public goals are met in higher education through influence rather than direction.

4.5. Governance

Governance is certain to feature as an issue in the OECD Review under the heading “Strategic Management and Structure”. Governance was raised publicly by Dr. Don Thornhill in his RIA address where he went so far as to suggest a new model for governance. The need for a change in university governance arrangements was also discussed at the C.H.I.U. meeting with the Minister on 17th December, 2003. Institutional Governance (5) along with Institutional Autonomy (2) and Institutional Leadership (6) are key matters addressed in Chapter 3 of the OECD Report *Education Policy Analysis 2003*.

4.6. Future Third Level Enrolments

One issue that must be examined by the OECD team is the question of future third level enrolments. The DES has been strangely silent on this issue for some time. It is understood that enrolment projections for third level prepared by Statistics Section in the DES indicate a very significant increase in enrolments over the next 15 to 20 years. It is not clear what the assumptions are on which the projections are based but it is clear that the changed inward/outward migration balance has skewed earlier projections.

The de Buitléir Committee stated that targets of maintaining participation within the OECD top quartile and mature student and access student targets could all be met with an enrolment level of 114,000. Current enrolments now stand 126,000 and it is clear from the HEA submission to the Enterprise Strategy Group that we have not met our quartile targets particularly in relation to the level of undergraduates. The graduate rate for Ireland is 29.3% and a rate of 39.5% would be required for the top quartile. It seems that if we were to meet graduate output targets a current enrolment of 140,000 plus would be needed. The HEA has proposed that Ireland should for the future, benchmark its higher education performance against the best in the OECD, the top decile.

Future growth of student numbers if being examined by the O' Kelly Group on capital projects. Clearly any basis the Minister may have had for drastically cutting funding for university infrastructure in 2002, 03 and 04 will be totally undermined if the indications of future student numbers hold true and a major expansion of third level enrolments is on the cards.

4.7. *International Students*

4.7.1. *Interdepartmental Working Group on Internationalisation of Education Services*

Dr W.J. Smyth, C.H.I.U., Chair, Dr F von Prondzynski, Professor Aidan Moran and C.H.I.U. Director met the Interdepartmental Working Group on 27th November, 2003. Dr. Smyth made a presentation to the Group which was followed by a short discussion. It appears that the Group has completed its consultations with interested parties and is preparing its report. No in-depth consultations have been conducted and it is clear that the Group lack real experience and expertise in dealing with the marketing of education services and recruitment of international students. The Minister's interest in this area seems to be premised on future spare capacity in the higher education sector but updated projections on future third level enrolments could paint a completely different picture.

4.7.2. *C.H.I.U. Working Group on International Students*

The Group met on 11th November, 2004 and discussed the supplementary proposal received from the IDP following further consideration by a subgroup. Concerns were expressed about the high costs of the services being offered and a number of representatives said that their universities had serious doubts about the added value they would get from engaging IDP. A subgroup was set up to carry out further negotiations with IDP on a range of issues. Issues were raised with IDP and a response was received. Further clarification as follows has been sought:

1. Two tabulations of figures are required, one based on seven universities participating and one based on five universities participating.
2. All figures to be expressed in Euros at the current exchange rate.
3. Each tabulation should cover the four years, 2004/5, 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08 as regards income earned and costs incurred in each of those years (the way in which IDP has aggregated the figures has caused some confusion).
4. Each tabulation might be organised as follows:
 - gross fee income earned in each year
 - fee income after deducting for commission payments in each year
 - all marketing and facilitation costs (not fee per item) in each year
 - income earned after all costs are deducted in each year
 - average income earned by each university on a pro rata basis in each year after all costs are deducted

IDP has been asked whether it would impact negatively on students if the universities bought in to a reduced integrated marketing services provision. IDP has been informed that the universities want to have a proportion of the costs of IDP's charges for integrated marketing services converted into commission which would demonstrate a most equitable sharing of risks. It is intended to put a proposal to the C.H.I.U. for consideration based on the IDP response awaited.

4.8. Access

The Head of the National Office for Access to Higher Education, Dr. Trant, and Ms. Christle, Senior Policy Advisor, have completed a round of consultations on access issues with Registrars and other university officers. They were very appreciative of the arrangements made by universities and the thoroughness of the discussions. Following on from the round of consultations, the National Office executive is preparing a discussion document which will focus on the question of the development of access targeted initiatives which should be available in February. The Office has taken over responsibility for the funding of the Access Targeted Initiatives, Special Fund for Students with Disabilities, the Student Assistance Fund and the Millennium Fund. Proposals are being drawn up for the appointment of an Advisory Group and nominations will be sought in the near future. It is hoped that a national framework strategy as recommended by the McNamara Action Group will be prepared by the end of the year.

The media continues to portray the work of the universities on access in a negative light as can be seen from newspaper coverage of the Report on HEA Review of Universities Equality Policies.

4.9. Discipline Balance

The Irish Times carried a report on 13th January, 2004 claiming to give details of a report prepared by Dr. Danny O'Hare on "Discipline Balance. HEA say that a report has not been completed but that the media story was informed by a confidential presentation made to the Authority last Autumn. It was understood that consideration is being given to integrating proposals for addressing some of the issues raised into a reformed funding model.

4.10. E-Learning

C.H.I.U., with the involvement of a number of institutes of technology and the support of the Council of Directors of IoTs, had prepared and submitted a proposal in February 2003 in response to a HEA call for expressions of interest in the development of an e-learning service for higher and further education. The HEA informed C.H.I.U. by letter dated 15th December, 2003 that no funding was available to continue the process.

A presentation on the C.H.I.U. e-learning proposal and paper was made by Dr. V. Wade, TCD, to the IBEC/C.H.I.U. Joint Council and it was agreed to establish a joint industry/university task force to examine how the C.H.I.U. proposals could be progressed with industry involvement.

4.11. Enterprise Strategy Group

A copy of the FGS funding paper, which argues that funding of universities is a key factor in maintaining competitive advantage was sent to the Group. The Group figures predominantly in Tánaiste's statements about future industrial policy and the need for investment in R&D and education. Dr. Hegarty represents C.H.I.U. on the Group and Dr. C. O'Carroll serves on the Group Research Committee.

5. National Task Force on Undergraduate Medical Education

C.H.I.U. has been formally invited to submit written proposals/suggestions on the current and future operation of the undergraduate medical training system. To assist C.H.I.U. in this matter the Task Force has identified the following key issues which it is 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 has already sought the views of the Registrars' Group on a submission made to the Task Force by the Medical Deans as an input to a C.H.I.U. position.

6. College Entry

6.1. High Point Degree Acceptors

The Skills Initiative Unit published a draft discussion paper entitled "*Discipline Choices and Trends for High Point Degree Acceptors*". The paper examines the disciplines accepted – and trends in those discipline acceptances – by high point Irish degree entrants in 2003 and recent years. High points are defined as 450 or more. The document sets out some important issues raised by an analysis of high point degree acceptors including the following:-

- The relationship between the patterns of high point degree acceptors and the strategic needs of those planning economic development, research programmes and high level skill needs of key sector,
- The under-representation of males amongst high point degree acceptors – an under-representation that seems to increase with increasing points,
- The under-representation of lower socio-economic groups amongst high-point degree acceptors,
- The consequent under-representation of males and those of lower socio-economic background in courses (and careers) that draw exclusively from high point entrants,
- The collapse of high-point entry to Computing degrees and its implications for future research programmes and related sectoral development: Strategies to address the decline in such enrolment,
- The enhancement of Technology and Engineering amongst high-point degree entrants and, in particular, Electronic Engineering,
- The important change from direct to postgraduate entry for Medically related courses and its implications for a wider range of skill areas,
- The nature of the Leaving Certificate, its assessment methods and its dominant role in higher education admission: gender related examination/assessment outcomes,

- The factors affecting discipline choice by high ability students: The extent to which their choices are influenced by fashion or by a close analysis of abilities and future opportunities: Information services to such students in relation to high-level future opportunities.

6.2. Points System

Dr. Séan McDonagh of the Skills Initiative Unit has also prepared and circulated a discussion document entitled “*The Points System – A Review Needed?*”. The paper suggests that since the Commission on the Points System submitted its first Report and Recommendations in 1999, there have been major changes in the context of higher education admissions which are listed as follows –

- A major emphasis on the promotion of equity and access in higher education in Ireland and internationally,
- Changes in the gender-related patterns of Leaving Certificate results – on which the points system depends – particularly at the higher levels,
- A growth in the number of under-subscribed courses which have no competition for admission – competition being an intended characteristic of the points system,
- A school leaver demographic decline which will increase the number of under-subscribed courses,
- The Ministerial announcement that direct admission to Medically related courses through the points system would change in 2005 to a system of post-graduate admission
- The development of the National Qualifications Framework with its emphasis on articulation and access and its potential to enable qualifications – other than the Leaving Certificate – at levels 4 and 5,
- An emphasis on higher education as the source of future key skills,
- An ongoing review of Senior Cycle provision including the Leaving Certificate which has the function of preparing for higher education as well as the effect – through the points system – of selecting for higher education,
- International discussion of admission issues; new consideration of the influence of schools and social background on individual performance in school examinations,
- A blurring of the distinction between full-time and part-time students.

The conclusions reached in the document are as follows –

The Points System, introduced when applicants greatly exceeded places, has served Ireland well. In greatly changed circumstances this system now needs to be reviewed to ensure greater fairness and effectiveness. Key issues that need to be addressed include –

- The major and growing gender differences now clear in Leaving Certificate performance particularly at high levels: understanding and addressing the fundamental causes of these differences,
- Consideration of the inclusion of other additional objective assessment methods to be included with Leaving Certificate in admission decisions,
- The recognition of school influences on individual Leaving Certificate performance: the possible allocation of additional points (on a sliding scale) to those from disadvantaged schools,

- The introduction of varied work-and-study formats articulated to Institute of Technology courses and focussed on skilled occupations,
- The replacement of some specialist higher education courses by programmes with more general initial stages leading to later specialisation

7. Quality Assurance

7.1. EUA review of QA procedures

7.1.1. Background

Early in 2002 the HEA first indicated their intention of proceeding with a review of universities QA procedures (under section 49 of the Universities Act, 1997). For a variety of reasons the proposed review did not take place. Subsequently there were significant developments which altered the QA landscape.

- At national level Minister for Education and Science pressed for a transparently first class quality assurance system and called for the creation of a quality brand for Irish higher education to make Ireland attractive and competitive in the international student marketplace.
- The OECD review of Irish higher education, due to begin shortly, is also a source of immediate pressure; universities must be able to demonstrate to the OECD team that they are pro-active in strengthening the quality of teaching, research and other services and in showing that their quality processes are comparable to the best in the world.
- At European level the Bologna Process, and in particular the Berlin Communiqué, stresses the importance of quality assurance in the transnational context, and sets 2005 as a deadline for agreement between countries for acceptance of one another's quality systems. An agreed part of this process is the review by external experts of the national quality system. ENQA also stresses the need for this kind of external review as a condition of membership.

It was felt that arrangements should be accelerated for a robust examination of QA procedures by external experts and of their effectiveness and their ability to induce change and modernisation throughout the university sector. Such an examination would strengthen the Irish University Sector position both locally and internationally by validating in a convincing way the procedures established. It would be an important element in the sector's dialogue with the DES, and give a strong hand in the debate on transnational recognition and certification of national systems.

In May 2003 the HEA entered discussions with the European University Association (EUA) on a section 49 review of QA procedures. There then emerged the possibility of combining this with a review of the effectiveness of the procedures under section 35 (4), which comes under the remit of the universities. At the IUQB meeting on 26 June a subcommittee composed of Judge B. McMahon, Dr. W.J. Smyth and Professor D. McQuillan was established to meet with the HEA in accordance with the remit of the Board in connection with section 35 (4): *'The Board will have a particular role in regard to protocols for the conduct of the reviews of the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance procedures in the universities as required by Section 35(4) of the Universities Act. The Board will approve the agencies that will conduct these periodic reviews and will provide reports on this process to the Council of C.H.I.U. and to the HEA'*.

To prepare for this meeting a preliminary meeting was held on 23 July in Maynooth involving Dr. W.J. Smyth, M. McGrath, D. McQuillan, M. Kerr and J. Hayden. A further meeting took place between Dr. Smyth, C.H.I.U. Director, Dr. Thornhill and M. Kerr. Given the pressures outlined above it was agreed that an immediate and objective review of the effectiveness of the QA procedures was imperative, and it was suggested that a way forward would be for the IUQB and the HEA to engage in a collaborative arrangement with the EUA to conduct S.35 and S.49 reviews. At a meeting in Limerick on 29th September 2003 the University Presidents agreed to support this collaborative approach.

A draft document on the proposed review was prepared and subsequently agreed at a meeting in NUIM involving Don Thornhill, John Hayden and Mary Kerr of HEA and Bryan McMahon, Seamus Smyth and Don McQuillan, the designated representatives of the IUQB. Finally the IUQB approved the document at its meeting on 19th November 2003.

7.1.2. *The review*

The review by the EUA of QA procedures and their effectiveness is jointly commissioned by the HEA and the IUQB. The legislative background, review process and outcomes are described in the agreed document 'Quality Review of Universities in Ireland'. Under the joint commission the EUA will –

- conduct, and report to the HEA on, an overall review of quality assurance procedures established by the universities, and
- in the case of each university, review and report on the effectiveness of its quality assurance procedures and the implementation of findings arising out of the application of those procedures, in the context of its overall institutional decision making and strategic planning

The EUA review will examine the following areas for each of the seven universities:

- Design and planning of existing internal quality processes
- Effectiveness of internal quality processes
- Relevance of internal quality processes and degree to which their outcomes are used in decision-making and strategic planning
- Perceived gaps in the internal mechanisms processes and frameworks and recommendations for enhancing them.

These key elements will be placed within an institutional analysis that will examine decision-making processes and will allow the review teams to comment on institutional obstacles and success factors for an effective internal quality management.

The IUQB will support the universities in the implementation of recommendations for improvement in the EUA reports with a view to achieving sustained best practice in Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement across the university sector. This is consistent with its aim to maintain and enhance the level of inter-university co-operation in developing quality assurance processes.

7.1.3. *Review Teams*

The EUA have organised four review teams to carry out the reviews in the seven universities.

7.1.4. Timetable

A timetable for the EUA process has been established. It will start in January with a seminar in Dublin on the 20th involving the EUA review teams together with the Presidents, Registrars and Quality Officers of the universities. It will end in December 2004 when the EUA sends a review report to each university and a sectoral report to the IUQB.

7.2. IUQB

7.2.1. Board Meetings

The second meeting of the IUQB took place in Dublin on 18/19th November, 2003. Presentations were made to the Board on case studies of QA reviews in two of the universities. The CEO reported on his meeting in Karlstad with the Director of ENQA to explore IUQB membership of that organisation. The importance of a speedy resolution of this issue was emphasised given Ireland's Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2004. The proposal that the Board and the HEA should jointly commission a review of QA procedures and their effectiveness by the EUA, as described in the document 'Quality Review of Universities in Ireland' was approved. The Berlin Communiqué issued following the Conference of Ministers on 18/19th September, 2003 was discussed. In the area of quality assurance it is clear that the Irish system broadly conforms to the principles set out in the Communiqué. The universities are in a good position with regard to the ECTS and Diploma Supplement requirements that must be in place by 2005. However the meaning of the requirement that each country have in place 'a system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures' gave rise to a long debate given that there is no clear understanding or agreement in Europe on the meaning of accreditation. The next meeting of the Board will take place on 11th February, 2004 in the C.H.I.U. Council Room.

7.2.2. Sectoral Projects

The sectoral proposal to the HEA for QA funding, submitted in June 2003, was successful. Funding was approved for the two projects entitled '*Strategic Planning and Organisation in Academic Departments*' and '*Sectoral Initiative on QI in Teaching and Learning*'. In addition funding was approved for project management support. Work is well advanced on the three projects 'PhD Training', 'Student Services' and 'Mathematics Learning'. In the case of 'PhD Training' additional funding of €10,000 has been donated by IRCSET and €2,000 by IRCHSS.

7.3. Irish Higher Education Quality Network

Meetings of the IHEQN took place in the C.H.I.U. Boardroom on 12th December 2003 and 7th January 2004. A document setting out the roles of DES, HEA, IUQB, NQAI, USI, HETAC and DIT with regard to quality assurance in Irish higher education was prepared by Dr. Pdraig Walsh, and the discussion is now centred on establishing agreed principles on QA.

7.4. Second IUQB International Conference

The Second IUQB International Conference will be held in the National University of Ireland Galway on 6th/7th February, 2004 and is entitled "*Learning in the Europe of Knowledge*". It is a joint EUA-IUQB conference organised by Professor Jim Gosling and presenters will include experts from Ireland and around the world.

8. International

8.1. Diploma Supplement

A national template for the Diploma Supplement and Guidelines for its use has been agreed by the national Diploma Supplement Working Group. An Information Seminar was held in the Alexander Hotel on 13th January 2004 organised by HETAC on behalf of the Department of Education and Science. On 20th February the Minister will launch a pilot implementation project involving DCU, DIT and Letterkenny IoT.

European Education Ministers have set the objective that every student graduating as from 2005 should receive the Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge. They appeal to institutions and employers to make full use of the Diploma Supplement, so as to take advantage of the improved transparency and flexibility of the higher education degree systems, for fostering employability and facilitating academic recognition for further studies. The possibility of including a so-called 'ECTS grade' in the Diploma Supplement is under discussion.

8.2. EUA Council

The 9th EUA Council meeting was held in Budapest on 23rd January, 2004 and C.H.I.U. was represented by Dr. R. Downer.

8.2.1. EUA Events

EUA / IUQB joint conference: 6-7 February 2004, Galway, Ireland. "Learning in the Europe of Knowledge"

EUA workshop: 27-28 February 2004, in Dublin, Ireland. Addresses the impact of organisational change in universities.

EUA management seminar: 16-21 April 2004, in Cork, Ireland. "Leadership and Strategic Management of Universities Seminar".

EUA Conference: 1-3 April 2004, Marseille, France. "Universities and Society: Engaging Stakeholders"

8.2.2. Networking

As part of the strategy to build the profile of IUQB CEO will serve as a member of the EUA review team visiting the University of Vilnius on 4-7th March, 2004, and as a member of a Working Group organised in the framework of the ASEAN- EU University Network Programme.

9. EU Presidency and Higher Education

The Taoiseach has stated that "*the Lisbon strategy is the major priority for the Irish Presidency of the EU*". The goal of the Lisbon Strategy is for the EU, over the next decade, to become "*the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world...*". Minister Noel Dempsey, TD, as President of the Council of Education Ministers is hoping to, as he says himself, "*re-invigorate the Lisbon agenda and ensure that education gets its rightful place to the forefront.*"

The European Commission in its paper "*The Role of the Universities in the Europe of Knowledge*" [February 2003] states –

“If it is to achieve its ambition of becoming the world’s most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy and society, Europe simply must have a first-class university system – with universities recognised internationally as the best in the various fields of activities and areas in which they are involved”.

The Commission, in detailing competitive challenges facing Europe, states the stark reality that American universities have far more substantial means than those of European universities – on average two to five times higher per student and warned that the worsening under-funding of European universities jeopardises their capacity to keep and attract best talent and to strengthen the excellence of their research and teaching activities. It notes that the March 2002 Barcelona European Council target to increase Europe’s research effort to 3% of the GDP implied a special effort to increase resources for the training of researchers in universities.

The European Council highlighted the importance to the Lisbon Strategy of increased investment in education by calling upon the Member States as part of the Strategy to meet a number of targets including *“a substantial annual increase in per capita investment in human resources”*.

What has the Government’s commitment been to date to addressing this Lisbon agenda? The track record speaks for itself. The Minister for Education and Science has relegated higher education and research to the lowest of his priorities. He paused funding for university research in 2003. He attacked the university current funding with an effective cut of 10% in 2004 having reduced capital funding for universities from €51m to €14m during 2003. In current expenditure terms the Minister’s response in 2004 to the Lisbon target of *“a substantial increase in per capita investment in human resources”* was to leave the universities with an effective shortfall of €800 per student.

By failing to give any funding priority to universities which are key to the Lisbon Strategy, the Minister for Education and Science has seriously damaged his own credibility to take on a leadership role in re-invigorating the Lisbon agenda. The Minister is unlikely to be taken seriously by his European Colleagues unless he is seen to be leading by example by urgently tackling the recurrent and capital under funding of Irish universities.

10. NQAI

The NQAI Conference on 17th October, 2003 launched the National Framework of Qualifications. The conference was hosted by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland in association with FETAC, HETAC, C.H.I.U., DIT and NCCA. The National Framework of Qualifications was introduced and the issues involved in its implementation explored from different perspectives – further education and training, higher education and training, schools, employment and access, transfer and progression. The Chair of the C.H.I.U. Registrars’ Group made a presentation at the Conference. The NQAI ‘Corporate Plan 2003-2006’ was published in December 2003.

The NQAI is organising a conference to be held on 8th March, 2004 in Dublin Castle, on behalf of the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment. The theme of the conference will be *“Towards 2010 – Common*

themes and approaches across higher education and vocational education and training in Europe". The Conference is intended to provide an opportunity to examine common themes and consider the extent to which policies and actions in each area could be jointly addressed. Four common themes – quality, credit, transparency/recognition, and frameworks of qualifications – will be explored in commissioned research which is to be presented to the conference. Further conference details will be made available on the Authority's website (www.nqai.ie).

11. IBEC/C.H.I.U. Joint Council

A Council meeting was held on 24th November, 2003. There were presentations and discussions on e-learning in universities, research developments in a major multi-national, C.H.I.U. developments in promoting research, and the possibility of developing a national business school.

12. HEAnet

HEAnet is Ireland's National Education and Research Network (NREN). In common with other European countries, the NREN was set up to provide high quality national and international connectivity for staff, students and researchers in Ireland's higher education and research institutions. HEAnet has implemented a broadband, resilient national network with high-speed international links to the worldwide Internet. The network is managed by the central Network Operations Centre.

A review of HEAnet and ITnet [the Institutes of Technology] has been underway for some time. The review is composed of two elements. The first is a technical review carried out by Sonas Innovation. This report has been completed and is on the HEA website (www.heai.ie). The report recommends that a single organisation be charged with the delivery of high-speed networking services to all research and educational establishments in Ireland and that HEAnet is well placed to undertake this role. The second element of the review was undertaken by Dr. Ed Molloy and its focus was the HEAnet governance and management structures. In summary, the report recommends HEAnet Board should comprise 11 members plus an independent chairperson as follows:-

Independent Chair	1
Dept. of Education & Science	1
Universities	4 (2 Heads, 2 IT/IS/Librarian Heads)
Institutes of Technology/DIT	2 (1 Head, 1 IT/IS/Librarian Heads)
Visionary Researchers	2
SFI	1
HEA	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	12

HEA/DES, while agreeing with the general thrust of the report, propose the inclusion of a representative from the Information Society Commission to strengthen the link between HEAnet and the wider eGovernment agenda. They have proposed reducing the Universities' representation from 4 to 3 (1 university Head instead of 2). The HEA intend to consult with stakeholders shortly on the review proposals. **The proposals represent a radical restructuring of HEAnet and consultations should be held between relevant**

senior officers within and between universities with the intention of forming an agreed universities position on the proposals.

13. HETAC

C.H.I.U. sought clarification from HETAC about the validation and accreditation process which the Hibernia College teacher training course underwent and referred to the question of university representatives on HETAC panels and committees. In his response, the HETAC Chief Executive does not provide clarification other than to say that he is satisfied that the recognition process for the Hibernia College course and other programmes operated by HETAC meet statutory requirements and highest national and international standards for programme accreditation. HETAC has offered a meeting with C.H.I.U. to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern.

14. Copyright

At its meeting on 12 January 2004 the C.H.I.U. Copyright Working Group, chaired by Dr. S. Phillips, UCD, reviewed the progress of discussions with ICLA on the terms of the higher education licence. It agreed, in view of the considerable improvements in the scope of the licence, especially with regard to digital copying, to recommend in its favour. Throughout the discussion, the Working Group also pressed for a reduction in cost and there has been a modest achievement in this respect. It was made clear at all times that the Working Group could not make financial commitments on behalf of the institutions represented.

The Working Group has also proposed that C.H.I.U. should obtain legal advice on the licence to ensure that the improvements agreed are adequately provided for.

15. Universities and the Erosion of the Post-Primary School Year

The post-primary school managements associations, the ACCS, JMB and IVEA have agreed on policy measures to tackle the erosion of the school year. They are seeking the agreement of the universities to the open rescheduling of days for students and further education courses for teachers to weekends and school holiday periods. Representatives of the Registrars' Group recently met with school management representatives to discuss the issue and a further meeting is planned.