

**C.H.I.U. Review [03/3] for C.H.I.U. Meetings
On 16th June, 2003 in Trinity College Dublin**

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1. Research

1.1 *Research Overheads*

The overheads report was presented to An Tánaiste and the Inter Departmental Committee on Science and Technology (IDC) on 6th June by John Donnelly (Chairman of the Steering Group on Research Overheads) and Conor O'Carroll. The IDC is composed of representatives from key government departments (Finance, Education, Health, Environment, Communications, the state agencies (IDA, Forfás, EI, HRB, HEA, SFI, EPA). There was unanimous acceptance of the report and its recommendations by An Tánaiste and the Committee. The report will now be published by HEA and Forfás.

**1.2 *European Research Area/Irish Presidency 2004
Barcelona Target (3% GDP on R&D 2010)***

The Commission has recently launched its 2nd Communication on 3% of GDP for research: "Investing in research: an action plan for Europe"
(http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/era/3pct/index_en.html)

Three working groups have been established by the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment. The Groups will report back to the Inter Departmental Committee on Science and Technology chaired by An Tánaiste in September. The three areas for action are Framework Conditions (mobility, tax breaks for R&D etc.), Business Expenditure on R&D (BERD) and Government Expenditure on R&D (GOVERD/BERD). The group chaired by COC on public expenditure has met twice and is mapping R&D spend predictions for 2003, 2006 and 2010. The Group is also studying alternative sources of funding (e.g. European Investment Bank), technology foresight and strategic technology platforms.

1.3 *Merrion Group*

Deadlines for Submission of Proposals – all agencies

The Merrion Group have prepared a document that summarises deadlines for all of the national funding agencies.

1.4 *Science Foundation Ireland*

SFI has launched the document "Vision 2003-2007: People, Ideas and Partnerships for a Globally Competitive Irish Research System". This outlines the vision, mission, strategic focus, operational philosophy and award programmes of SFI. The document also lists specific goals through to 2007 for the Foundation. It provides measurement metrics to judge whether these have been achieved.

• ***Centres for Science Engineering and Technology 2002 (CSET2002)***

A total of 3 proposals were funded with a total value of €42m.

- **SFI Investigator Programme Grants**
Note that there are no longer fixed deadlines for this scheme; proposals may be submitted at any time.
- **SFI Fellowships – Research Professorships**
SFI is offering 12 awards under this programme but have only received 2 proposals to date.

1.5. Research Councils

1.5.1. IRCHSS

The Council has awarded the following:

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| Senior Research Scholarships | 8 |
| Research Fellowships | 10 |
| Senior Research Fellowships | 13 |

1.5.2. IRCSET

- **Postgraduate Scholarships**
The postgraduate scholarship results will be announced later this month. There will be a second call in July for these scholarships.
- **Basic Research Grants Scheme 2003**
The Basic Research Grants Scheme 2003 has funded a total of 88 proposals with a total value of €12m. The overall success rate was only 15%, a drop on previous years **Appendix 1(e)**.

1.6. Enterprise Ireland

Intellectual Property/Technology Transfer/Commercialisation

The C.H.I.U. IP Group has continued to meet with EI on these issues.

1.7. All Island Research Portal

The development of the portal is now almost complete and will be launched on 1st July. Initially there will be four universities whose researcher expertise will populate the portal database (DCU, NUI-Maynooth, QUB and UCD). It is expected that all nine universities will be present by the end of 2003. Interviews have been conducted for the post of Manager expertiseireland.com and it is expected that an appointment will be made shortly.

1.8. EU Sixth Framework Programme

1.8.1 Marie Curie/Mobility Programme

A total of nine Marie Curie schemes had closure dates in April and May, covering both individual and host-driven actions. The National Delegate, Dr. O’Carroll and the National Contact Point, Siobhan Harkin have dealt with hundreds of enquiries and reviewed around 40 proposals from Irish proposers across a broad range of scientific disciplines. This assistance will help to increase the success rate of Irish universities in this FP6 programme.

1.8.2. Ex-Ante Evaluation of National Support Structures

A study commissioned by Forfás, to determine if the current national support structures meet the needs of would-be participants in FP6, is currently at draft stage. It makes a number of key recommendations around defining a strategic approach to FP6 nationally

and a more proactive role of the support structures. The extensive experience of the University Research Officers was highlighted.

1.8.3 Sign-off Procedures

Currently, applicants to FP6 are not required to submit institutional signatures. Despite individual university sign-off procedures, some proposals will have been submitted under FP6 without the formal knowledge of the university administration. The universities are currently discussing this issue. It is essential that proposals go through the proper in-house procedures to ensure accurate project costings are carried out and that the university is fully aware of all proposals made under FP6.

2. University Funding 2003

2.1. Fees Controversy

The political controversy resulting from Minister Dempsey's publicly stated support for the reintroduction of payment of tuition fees by students monopolised the media headlines during May 2003. Speculation about the imposition of fee charges on students was allowed to run rife in the absence of an objective and comprehensive analysis of the issues. The much promised but much delayed report of the review conducted by the DES of the funding of fees issue never surfaced. With no analysis or options being tabled by the Minister, debate about the reintroduction of fees descended into a political controversy raising issues such as taxing the rich to pay for the disadvantaged and speculation about the inevitability of future reductions in any proposed means-testing thresholds for payment of fees. Given the Minister's declared initial intent of considering the reintroduction of tuition fee payments as a means of providing funding for the support of disadvantaged students, the prospects of shifting the focus of the debate in the media to providing extra funding for universities through fees were very slight. As the controversy gathered momentum and became more politically heated an objective and rational analysis of the issues and their merits was more and more unlikely to influence a decision which was in the last analysis going to be one driven by considerations of political convenience. The controversy became a crisis issue for the Government and has resulted in declarations by the Taoiseach, Minister for Education and Science and other government Ministers that payment of undergraduate tuition fees by students will not be reintroduced by this government. The possibility of a further substantial increase in the student services charge this year was also ruled out by Minister Dempsey.

The paper on university funding prepared by Farrell Grant Sparks which it was hoped could have informed the fees debate is being redrafted to take account of comments received from C.H.I.U. Council and UCFOG and the outcome of the tuition fees controversy.

2.2. Recurrent Funding 2003

Universities' plans to achieve a break-even financial position on foot of financial and staffing cutbacks are contingent on a realistic increase in tuition fee for 2003/04. UCFOG is particularly concerned about the serious negative impact of elimination of the backlog maintenance and equipment grants and information on projects affected because of the cuts is being co-ordinated with a view to making a case for the retention of the provision which was €14.2m in 2002 [€5.5m plus €8.7m]. The issue of loss of funding due to falls in student intake on skills programmes is also being pursued with the HEA. Universities' concerns that the impact of the 2003 funding cuts would have a greater carry-through

impact in 2004 have been heightened by the extra pressure that the €42m disadvantaged package will have on the DES Estimates for 2004.

2.3. Tuition Fees

The major current issue requiring resolution is a tuition fee increase for 2003/04. Proposals prepared in accordance with the agreed HEA/C.H.I.U. formula were submitted to the HEA. Having considered the proposals, the HEA made recommendations on increases in tuition fees for 2003/04 and core grant for 2004 to DES. Both the C.H.I.U. proposals and HEA recommendations included provision for meeting the cost of pay increases. DES has since said that pay revision costs will be met separately. DES is hoping to indicate an approved rate of fee increase by mid-June.

2.4. Capital Funding

The C.H.I.U. Working Group sought information from universities on their priority capital projects to see whether it was possible to draw up a priority infrastructural investment programme for the sector. This exercise has been overtaken by a HEA letter dated 23rd May, 2003 sent to the universities and other higher education institutions informing them of a review of all capital projects in the third level sector already, or intended to be, submitted. The review is prompted by the current to medium-term exchequer funding situation, the €1.8bn aggregate value of capital projects already submitted and preparation by government departments of a multi-annual capital programme. The HEA has established a working group chaired by Kevin Kelly (ex AIB) and includes Tom Mitchell, Gay Corr, Noel Lindsay and Dick Sweeney. Universities, IOTs, etc., have been requested to submit/resubmit capital projects classified and prioritized under five headings – Health and Safety, National Priority, Strategic Priority, Other and Eliminated Projects. At a meeting with the HEA on 3rd June, 2003 the composition of the Working Group and its terms of reference were discussed and C.H.I.U. expressed concerns about lack of consultation and the unrealistic deadlines set. C.H.I.U. representatives also questioned the meaningfulness of the exercise in the absence of a policy framework which would set out in a comprehensive and coherent form the strategic aims, direction plans and programmes for the HE sector at national, regional and institutional levels.

It would be completely inappropriate to allow the Working Group simply to interpret national, regional or other priorities where they have not been clearly articulated and/or their interconnectedness and relative importance spelt out. Furthermore, the terms of reference, in requiring the Working Group to set priorities, are in fact asking the Group to set policy priorities that go beyond the scope of recommendations on capital projects. Other concerns are policy factors listed without their significance or relative importance explained, e.g. –

- Demographics
- Access, mature students
- Research expansion/increase post grad students
- FDI, BMW region, national spatial strategy

Policy factors are included in 19 criteria listed with no indication given as to how they are to be weighted.

2.5. *PRTL I Cycle 3*

The HEA sponsored proposal designed to provide loans to facilitate early progress on PRTL I Cycle projects is currently under consideration in the DES. The Government seems to be unable or unwilling to treat this issue as an urgent matter which is seriously undermining its aim of developing a sustainable knowledge-based economy.

2.6. *ESF Third Level Measures*

DES has received word from the European Commission that as an exceptional measure the Commission will allow the claim for the Undergraduate Skills Measure to be submitted largely based on the methodology outlined in the Department's document of 11th July, 2002 – i.e. based on timetabled lecture hours. While some concession has been granted in relation to receipt requirements, the basic concerns voiced by the universities about the claims format have largely been ignored. The HEA has informed universities that this means that universities will be required to prepare claims for 2000, 2001, and 2002 for submission by 31st October, 2003. The HEA is convening a meeting of relevant university officers on 25th June, 2003 to discuss the methodology for making claims.

2.7. *Student Assistance Fund*

The HEA has written to the universities informing them of the outcome of a DES review of the eligibility criteria for the Student Assistance Fund – particularly in relation to the eligibility of students on Foundation and Access Courses. Subject to certain conditions, Foundation and Access courses are included within the remit of the fund for 2002/03 academic year only but excluded for subsequent years.

3. HEA Issues

3.1. *Meeting with HEA*

A meeting was held with HEA Chairman and Executive on 3rd June, 2003 and C.H.I.U. was represented by Council members and representatives of the UCFOG and Registrars' Group. Items discussed were grouped under headings as follows - University Funding, Access, PRTL I Cycle 3, HEA Quality Review, Strategic Planning for the Higher Education Sector.

3.2. *Harmonisation of Financial Statements*

A second draft of the PWC prepared Consolidation Reporting Template for the University Sector was sent to the HEA on 17th April, 2003. The HEA has forwarded the draft to the C&AG. A clarification meeting was held on 9th June, 2003 between representatives of the C.H.I.U. Working Group and HEA officers with a view to clearing the way for HEA approval.

3.3. *Definition of an EU Student*

The C.H.I.U. Working Group established to devise a common definition of an EU student for tuition fee purposes has prepared draft criteria for determining the EU Fee Status of an applicant for consideration at C.H.I.U. meetings on 16th June, 2003.

3.4. *Working Group on Undergraduate Medical Education*

C.H.I.U. is to consider a proposal for a Department of Health and Children/DES sponsored Working Group and came to the view that that the Departments were attempting to establish one group to deal with what were two distinctive and separate issues. There is an immediate and short-term issue concerning the clinical side of medical

education and the relative contributions from the hospitals and the universities towards meeting the costs involved that needed to be addressed urgently. This is an issue for the Deans of Medicine and should be separated from the longer term structural issues such as curriculum development, manpower requirements, etc. DES was informed of the Council's views.

4. Higher Education Sector Strategic Planning

4.1. OECD Review

The intention of the Minister for Education and Science to invite the OECD to conduct a review of Irish Higher Education was reported on in the media in the context of coverage of the controversy surrounding the question of reintroduction of payment of tuition fees by students. The Minister dismissed this media report. However, a day or two after the €12m Disadvantage Fund announcement, the OECD Economic Survey Country Review on Ireland - May 2003 was published and was reported in the media as advocating payment of tuition fees by students. The report notes that Ireland has followed the international trend of introducing market based principles into the public sector with the aim of enhancing efficiency in publicly funded services through competition and observes that there is still room for further exploiting the benefits of market mechanism. Under the heading "*User Charges can be extended to other services*" the report states that "*such heavy subsidization of higher education is questionable on both equity and efficiency grounds, in particular given that the private return to education is much higher than the social rate of return for those who have a university degree*". The report suggests that the government might consider introducing a government backed loan scheme pointing to their success in other countries.

The Minister has informally informed C.H.I.U. and CODIT that he is proceeding with arrangements for the OECD Review of Irish Higher Education and that he is willing to consult about the terms of reference for the study. As yet draft terms of reference have not been received for comment by C.H.I.U. C.H.I.U. is in continuous contact with DES about this project which seems to have been on hold during the fees controversy. It is not clear whether arrangements have been formalised for the preparation of a background paper which is the normal first step in an OECD Review. It is important that the OECD Review terms of reference should set the review in the context of where Ireland aims to be in terms of economic social and cultural development in 10 to 15 years time benchmarked against the plans of other OECD countries. The review should be requested to report on the contribution that the higher education and research system would be required to make to the achievement of those aims and the changes to, and investment necessary in, the higher education sector. The OECD Review should be informed by important international developments and trends in higher education under initiatives such as the European Higher Education Area, European Research Area and GATS.

4.2. "The Role of the Universities in the Europe of Knowledge"

The EUA has now issued a response to this European Commission document. In summary, the EUA –

- "are convinced of the unique role universities have to play in building Europe and that it is in the interests of society to ensure that universities can fulfill their potential if Europe is to advance,
- are ready to 'contract with governments' at European level on this basis bearing in mind that this implies significant additional resources for universities – that should not

only come from private stakeholders – and which should be allocated on the basis of demonstrated capacity for strategic planning and management, quality assurance and development,

- urge the Commission to facilitate debate between universities and their stakeholders at the highest level in order to arrive at a framework agreement and operational plans for future development,
- believe that European universities, the European University Association and the European student bodies should be fully involved in the planning and development of further European initiatives resulting from the present Communication”.

This European Commission communication is an important contribution to the debate on the development of a coherent, compatible and competitive European Higher Education Area called for by the Bologna Declaration. The issues and questions raised in the EC Communication must form part of the agenda for review of the Irish Higher Education Sector

4.3. GATS

In the review and development of national higher education policies, governments and higher education institutions must begin to take more account of the potential impact of new international trade regulations on higher education. The emerging WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is appearing on the education reform agendas in more and more countries across the world. GATS proposals raise issues for such fundamental areas as the role of government in education, student access, accreditation and quality assurance, recognition of qualifications, funding, internationalization of academic relations, cultural diversity and higher education role and values. These and other issues are discussed in the latest Observatory on borderless higher education report “*GATS Trade and Higher Education – Perspectives 2003 – Where are we?*” by Dr. Jane Knight. The report lists the range of issues being raised by stakeholder groups as follows:-

- the fear that public domestic provision of higher education may be undermined by foreign competition and national education policy objectives may be at risk,
- the belief that trade, coupled with commercialisation and commodification of higher education, will put more importance on economic benefits than on the academic, social, scientific and cultural contributions of higher education to society,
- that increased trade by for-profit providers using new delivery methods may jeopardise consumer confidence and public trust in the quality of higher education and the need to be alert to public opinion and confidence in public/private higher education institutions who are active in trade of education services.
- higher education is seen to be different from other service sectors due to the public mandate and the role of government.
- even though in some countries the demand for higher education surpasses the capacity of the domestic system, the introduction of foreign commercial providers and public/private institutions requires close monitoring in terms of equitable access for students.
- many of the barriers identified for Mode 2 (study abroad) and Mode 4 (movement of people) do not fall within the GATS framework. These include aspects such as visas, work permits, immigration status as well as those barriers put into place by a country wanting to prevent consumption abroad. It is Mode 3 (commercial presence) that merits the closest scrutiny. It is pointed out that what may be seen as barriers by

exporting countries are in fact, fundamental aspects of the regulatory system in the importing country.

- The impact of trade in education services on institutional autonomy, academic freedom, brain drain and academic employment requires further investigation.
- One of the most critical implications is the impact of increased trade on the quality of higher education provision and the recognition of qualifications and accreditation. Quality standards and mutual recognition issues should be addressed by the education sector, and outside the purview of trade agreements.
- There is significant concern that increased trade in education will characterize and promote higher education as a ‘private good’ rather than a ‘public good’.

The report observes that GATS “*focus thus far has been almost entirely on the teaching side of education and has not addressed implications for research. Research is an integral part of the university role and further investigation is needed into the potential impact on applied research and especially privately contracted or funded research. Do public education institutions that undertake research and development activities have unfair advantage over private organizations who do not usually receive public support for their activities? Could public subsidies be construed as a barrier to fair trade or under the national treatment condition be applicable to private providers?*”

The report advises that “*attention needs to be given to potential public backlash to the efforts of public higher education institutions to recruit large numbers of international students (even if they are paying differential fees) and invest public funds in overseas commercial ventures that may or may not be profitable*”.

Attention is also drawn to TRIPS, which is another WTO agreement and stands for Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. It makes the point that issues involved which are of particular interest to the higher education community relate to whether intellectual property rights will encourage or inhibit innovation and research, who owns copyright of materials used in e-education, and protection of indigenous knowledge.

The report concludes that “*GATS is a new, untested and evolving agreement. The interpretations of existing articles and obligations can change and new disciplines can be developed. There continues to be more questions than answers. There is time for the higher education sector to become better informed about how best to move forward to maximize the benefits and minimize the risks of commercial trade.*”

4.4. Future Structure of the HE Sector

4.4.1. CODIT Report

The Council of Directors of Institutes of Technology (CODIT) published a report on 13th May, 2003 calling for a new policy framework for Irish Higher Education. The report entitled “*Institutes of Technology and the Knowledge Society – Their Future Position and Roles*”, was prepared by a Working Group headed by Dr. Pat Fottrell. The report was commissioned as part of the IOTs strategic planning process. Points made in the report include –

- The need for a new academic paradigm which takes account of demographic changes and the transition to a knowledge economy,
- The need to continue to implement and further develop responsive and flexible systems of programme design and delivery, credit transfer and credit accumulation that will meet the new and changing needs of students and employers,

- Institutes of Technology potential to support national and regional development policies including National Spatial Strategy should be fully utilised, ensuring they are resourced to act as ‘engines of growth’ in their region,
- Because of research infrastructural deficits in Institutes of Technology, relative to universities, additional forms of competitive funding should be assigned to the Institutes of Technology to redress this imbalance and allow them play an even more active role in collaborative research initiatives,
- That each institute should continue to provide and develop multi-level/multi-discipline courses that are informed by and related to national and regional priorities,
- That collaboration and co-operation with other institutions of higher education is necessary in order to provide students with access to a full range of higher education opportunities as well as to avoid costly duplication of provision,
- The Institutes of Technology need to articulate a vision, which encompasses the highest possible level of co-operation with the PLC sector in order to facilitate transparent transfer and progression arrangements for students. This vision should also aim to support course development, staff development and quality assurance in further education,
- The linkages established between Institutes of Technology and Universities under PRTLTI and SFI in the establishment of ‘centres of excellence’ in research should be expanded and should be financially encouraged by the relevant funding authorities.

On the question of the future structure of the higher education sector, the report states that there are a range of options including the following –

- Retention of the Institute of Technology designation under new legislation, which provides for the autonomy necessary to respond to regional, national and international challenges and opportunities,
- The creation of a National Technological University with some or all of the Institutes of Technology being constituent colleges,
- Designation of the Institutes of Technology as University Institutes of Technology. (The term “University” is a controlled description under Section 52 of the Universities Act, 1997),
- Encouraging individual Institutes to seek constituent/recognised college status of existing universities. (This is provided for in Section 8 of the Universities Act, 1997),
- Examination of a case for separate university status following application under the Universities Act. (This is provided for under Section 9 of the Universities Act, 1997),

The report concludes that there is no single solution that would accommodate the different regional dynamics facing each Institute, but that whatever future structures may emerge, they will require underpinning by new legislation that must, as a minimum, provide a greater degree of autonomy for the Institutes.

4.4.2. DIT Report

In May 2003, DIT published a discussion paper entitled “*Towards an Integrated System of Tertiary Education*” which was prepared by Prof. Malcolm Skilbeck as part of DIT’s strategic planning process. The report argues that the Binary System has outlived its usefulness and should be abandoned in favour of an integrated cascade system involving the redefinition of the concept of an Irish university. As part of the cascade system, the establishment of DIT and WIT as universities is proposed.

In proposing the establishment of DIT as a university, little heed, if any, is paid to the reasons advanced by the HEA for recommending rejection of the McNally Commission report on the DIT application for university status under Section 9 of the Universities Act, 1997. The case made by Prof. Skilbeck in this report for university status for WIT, including reference to a strong local campaign for a university in the South-East, is very general. No specific institutional recommendations are made in relation to the remaining IOTs as they were seen to be outside the remit of the Report.

4.4.3. Universities/IOT

As reported in the last C.H.I.U. Review, a paper prepared on the topic of Coherent Higher Education Sector has been submitted to C.H.I.U. Council. The paper will be considered in the context of the publications at 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 above. C.H.I.U. representatives have met informally with CODIT representatives with a view to developing university/IOT relations in shaping the future of the HE Sector. An immediate issue of concern to the IOTs and universities is implementation of the Minister's proposal to transfer funding and administrative responsibility for IOTs from DES to the HEA by end 2003. C.H.I.U. representatives sought clarification from the HEA at the meeting on 3rd June, 2003 but no firm information was available from DES.

4.5. E-Learning

The HEA has not yet responded to the expressions of interest submitted for the provision of an eLearning service for higher and further education. The delay is related to uncertainty surrounding the availability of the funding provision originally set aside by the Minister for Finance. The C.H.I.U. proposal for an eLearning Agency prepared by the C.H.I.U. New Forms of Learning Group would, if it is successful, allow for major progress in the strategic development of eLearning services in higher education. A copy of the presentation on the report prepared by the NFL Group as part of the Strategic Planning Process was made by the Group Chairman, E O'Driscoll to C.H.I.U. Council on 7 April, 2002. C.H.I.U. Council agreed to the report's recommendations set out below and is considering the funding and resourcing implications of implementing them:

- i. that the Heads of Universities and senior management must take ownership and actively lead the change agenda as a strategic priority,
- ii. that each University should further build capability for eLearning that complements existing and new teaching and learning methods,
- iii. that C.H.I.U. establish an eLearning Steering Group,
- iv. that C.H.I.U. set up a University community website, HEAnet hosted, to provide an access portal to information about eLearning and to stimulate collaboration and sharing of eLearning resources,
- v. that the Universities exploit all opportunities for joint purchasing of online journals and online aggregated journal databases,
- vi. that digital repositories be created to facilitate sharing (storing, access and retrieval) of eLearning content, multimedia documents and assets,
- vii. that the Universities develop a common on-line course which would provide a professional qualification for lecturers in teaching and learning in higher education with a strong emphasis on eLearning techniques,
- viii. that the Universities, through an active collaborative programme of research, establish Ireland as a centre of expertise in eLearning pedagogy and technology,
- ix. that C.H.I.U. establishes an eLearning Agency with clear objectives of increasing access and improving quality in a cost effective manner for the Higher Education and Further Education sectors.

4.6. *Access*

Minister Dempsey's declared priority since taking up office has been to take action to improve access for disadvantaged students to education. The priority does not appear to be shared by his cabinet colleague Ms. Mary Coughlan, TD, Minister for Social and Family Affairs. Her decisions on the Back to Education Allowance Scheme to suspend it for the summer months and to debar postgraduate students has caused real problems for disadvantaged mature students and has led to strong criticism of the government. The Chairman of the Registrars' Group wrote to the Minister to express universities' concerns about the cutbacks and to advocate restoration of the dropped provisions.

The DES review of state provision for payment of third level student tuition fees and maintenance grants and the return of payment by students of fees were designed to produce funds for targeting state support in a more focused way at disadvantaged students. The Minister's plan ran aground in a political storm against a Leaving Cert deadline, which does not seem to have been anticipated, and without the ballast of a DES Review or firm proposals which might have emanated from it. In the end, political convenience dictated that a proposal to reintroduce the payment by students of tuition fees be scrapped for the lifetime of this government. The Minister did however win his battle for extra funding to support access by disadvantaged students to higher education. The package of €42m announced on 25 May, 2003 provides for a 15% increase in maintenance grant levels, extends eligibility thresholds with graduations, increases "Top-Up" grant to maximum Unemployed Assistance and increases threshold for non-payment of student services charge to €40,000. The increased funding will undoubtedly be welcomed by those already in third level, and those aspiring to enter, who are eligible to benefit. The Minister's initiative however has failed to tackle the recognised, and much commented on, unfairness in the means testing arrangements for maintenance grants, an issue which should surely have been addressed in the DES Review which has not yet been published. As an article by Dr. Garrett Fitzgerald in the Irish Times 6 June 2003 points out, access to higher education is not just a matter of money. In this regard, the Minister's announcement does not deal with other recommendations of the McNamara Report which at this stage must be awaiting the establishment of the National Access Office. This latter matter was discussed at the HEA meeting on 3rd June, 2003 and the appointment of Chief Executive Officer for the office is pending following interviews which have been held.

4.7. *International Students*

It is understood that the DES has been taking action on the following statement made by Minister Dempsey in an address he gave in Athlone in March, 2003.

"... the Irish education system is held in very high esteem and we need to accelerate progress in accessing the overseas market ... Some of our third level institutions are already well tapped into the foreign education market but, overall, the experience seems to me to be patchy and disjointed. Over the next few months, I will formulate a strategy which I hope will benefit the third level sector here in developing an international focus... In my view, the strategy needs to have an Irish grand quality mark attached to it that will be recognised and accepted internationally..."

A draft memorandum for government was prepared by DES and circulated to other government departments for views. Details of what is being proposed are not available but it is safe to assume that they would have to address the interdepartmental aspects of

any plan to expand overseas student recruitment and the coordination and streamlining of relevant government services required for Ireland to become a serious player in the international student market.

Arising out of the C.H.I.U. Strategic Planning process the HEA undertook to look into the issue of developing a policy position in relation to the attraction of overseas students to study in Ireland. Subsequently the HEA commissioned a study from Fitzpatrick Associates and hope to be in a position within the next month to publish a paper and recommendations. The HEA Chairman gave a paper at the North/South Conference – *“Ireland as a Centre of Excellence in Third Level Education”* in which he drew heavily on the Fitzpatrick work. Some points about Dr. Thornhill’s proposal are:

- support for the development of a comprehensive policy to increase recruitment of overseas students by HE institutions and a national strategic entity – the “Strategy Board” - proposed to bring coherence in the area,
 - while the “Strategy Board” is needed to support institutions in international student development C.H.I.U. might have concerns about what might appear to be overly-bureaucratic functions in terms of requirements to be placed on universities.
 - one such requirement is for 3 or 5 year strategic and business plans for approval by the Strategy Board for certification for quality brand purposes and marketing support.
- C.H.I.U. might also have reservations about the proposal to assign overall responsibility for marketing support and promotion to Enterprise Ireland, particularly when EI would assess the marketing plans of individual universities,
- one might reasonably assume that plans for recruitment of international students would be part of university’s strategic plan which is already subject to review by the HEA under the Universities Act,
- there is a sense of the proposals seeking to regulate and control development of overseas student activities to a degree that may not be consistent with the level of institutional initiative that is required in order to be successful in what is a highly competitive commercial area,
- it is not clear how a proposal to engage an organisation such as IDP Australia to market, and recruit students for, Irish Universities would fit in with the policies and structures suggested.

A background paper was prepared for the North/South Conference by IEBI. Mr. John Deupree of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) gave an interesting paper on strategies used by Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Netherlands, New Zealand and the UK to recruit US students. The ‘Conclusions’ section of the paper gives a useful overview of national collaborative efforts to recruit overseas students and the increasing importance being attached to such efforts.

At the conference Lindy Hyam, CEO, said that IDP Education Australia was interested in providing marketing, recruitment and research services to Ireland. C.H.I.U. Council members present met with Ms. Hyam during the conference and she undertook to forward a proposal to C.H.I.U. as a follow up to the meeting and previous contacts and correspondence.

5. NQAI

5.1. National Framework of Qualifications

The NQAI circulated a document which sets out the Authority's determinations in relation to the national framework of qualifications. The document includes the titles of the initial award-types and updated award type descriptors to take account of the titles. The Authority has decided that the titles of the initial award-types should be considered as part of the framework determinations already made by the Authority and that the universities should be requested to implement these titles.

Mr. John McGinnity, Assistant Registrar, NUIM, has been nominated as C.H.I.U. representative on an NQAI group to assist the Authority in implementing a communications strategy for the qualifications framework. The NQAI is hosting a meeting of UK and Irish Qualifications and Regulatory Authorities on 12th/13th June, 2003 at which Dr. C. Hussey and Dr. D. Redmond will represent C.H.I.U.

5.2. NARIC/ENIC

The Trends III Report and paragraph 7.2. below identifies the Lisbon Convention as the most important legal tool for recognition of qualifications but notes that only two thirds of the Bologna signatory countries have so far ratified the Convention. According to the report more than half of the academic staff in the Bologna countries are not very aware or not aware at all of the provisions of the Lisbon Convention. Close cooperation with the relevant ENIC/NARIC is reported by only 20% of HEIs while 25% don't cooperate at all with their ENIC/NARIC. A further 25% of HEIs say they don't know what ENIC/NARIC is.

The ENIC and NARIC Networks provide an important forum for the development of European recognition policies and practice as well as for cooperation between individual information centres. The two Networks cooperate very closely and hold joint annual meetings as well as joint meetings of the ENIC Bureau and the NARIC Advisory Board. The ENIC Network also has a statutory role in the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The NARIC Network encompasses the countries of the European Union and the European Economic Area as well as the Associated Countries. The ENIC Network encompasses all NARICs as well as all parties to the European Cultural Convention (Council of Europe), members of the UNESCO Europe Region, parties to the Lisbon Recognition Convention and/or parties to the UNESCO Regional Convention for Europe. The ENIC Network therefore covers all countries of Europe as well as Australia, Canada, Israel and the United States of America. While academic recognition is the main area of activity of both networks, many NARICs also function as contact points for the EU Directives on professional recognition.

NQAI has set up a consultative group to advise the Authority in the performance of its NARIC/NRP recognition coordination functions and has invited C.H.I.U. to participate. As part of the work of the consultative group awarding bodies, including the universities, are being requested to provide before 27th June, 2003 the following information in relation to processes for recognising awards in the State which are made outside the State:

- Nature of award recognition queries being dealt with – for what purpose is award recognition being sought, e.g., entry to programmes of education and training or entry to employment.
- Extent of award recognition queries – what is the volume of queries and is it possible to sub-group the queries.

- Detail on procedures used in, or general approach to, processing queries.
- Timescale involved in processing queries.
- Any feedback from those who are seeking recognition.
- Information on the involvement of the university in the recognition outside the State of awards made here.

6. Quality Assurance

6.1.1. *International EUA*

Developing a European Dimension to Quality Assurance was one of the key issues debated at the Graz Convention (see para. 7.1. below). The EUA holds that the two major dimensions to quality in higher education - internal (the responsibility of the institution) and external (part of public accountability procedures) should combine to meet the following goals:

- Developing a European dimension in higher education and managing diversity while achieving greater compatibility.
- Promoting innovative, creative and dynamic institutions in a context characterised by diversity of missions, levels and contexts.
- Preserving and extending institutional autonomy while meeting the need for accountability.
- Avoiding a big bureaucracy related to quality assurance or producing burdensome mechanisms that would generate QA fatigue and the standardisation of institutions or curricula.

The EUA has proposed a European code of principles and an action plan which includes a proposal for a “Higher Education Quality Committee for Europe” that would have a forum and a board. The forum would serve as a round-table to discuss issues and trends in higher education and quality assurance. It would include as its members:

- All accredited QA agencies working in Europe (including non-governmental and non-European agencies)
- All higher education institutions with degree-awarding powers.

The board would be a decision-making body and serve as a meta-evaluation agency.

- Its members would include representatives of governments, higher education institutions (such as EUA), student associations (such as ESIB), employers, trade unions and the EC.
- It would report to the Bologna signatory countries.
- It would work with similar bodies around the world to ensure the transparency of European higher education at international level.

These proposals are intended as a serious attempt by EUA to retrieve ground lost by the universities to ENQA in the Bologna Quality Assurance debate. Developments on QA at a European level will undoubtedly impact on Irish political perceptions and expectations of QA in universities so it is crucial that IUQB and the universities keep themselves fully abreast of European/Bologna developments on QA and try to influence them through the EUA, ENQA, and the DES Steering Committee on Bologna.

6.2. ENQA

The European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) describes itself as the overarching organisation for European quality agencies in the field of higher education. It has achieved a high profile in the Bologna Process. The intention is that IUQB would consider becoming a member of ENQA and Professor McQuillan has attended a number of ENQA meetings. ENQA has prepared a draft statement to the Berlin Conference of European Ministers of Education to be held in September 2003. In the statement ENQA has set out membership criteria as follows:

- The agency undertakes external quality assessments (at institutional level) on a regular basis. These quality assessments may involve evaluation, review, audit, assessment or accreditation and they should be part of the core functions of the agency,
- The agency should be involved in external quality assurance in at least one subject/field,
- The agency must be independent of individual higher education institutions. An organisation or entity inside a higher education institution is not considered an external quality assurance agency by the Network,
- The agency has been recognised as a national or regional quality assurance agency by the competent public authorities,
- The agency must have been operating for a minimum of two years to be adopted as a full member. Until that time the agency may be granted a candidate status,
- The agency or organisation must not be constituted as a profit-making concern,
- The agency must be adequately independent from government,
- The agency has established its own internal quality assurance mechanisms,
- The agency can provide documentation for the quality of its evaluations.

The introduction of this criteria-based mechanism is seen by ENQA chief, Christian Thune, as facilitating the development of ENQA as an accreditation agency for the recognition of higher education quality assurance agencies in Europe, something which EUA would oppose. C.H.I.U. objections raised to this development within the DES Bologna Group with a view to informing the Irish Government position on this issue have been favourably received.

6.3. IUQB

A meeting of the IUQB will be held on 26th June, 2003 at which QA developments at both national and international levels will be reviewed. In this regard the following statement made recently by Minister Dempsey probably reflects a commonly shared view among politicians about QA in universities –

“On the issue of quality, I must admit that I have a concern that insufficient attention is being paid to the quality of teaching at third level. It seems to me that there are too many instances where lecturers are standing up in front of a class without ever having shown an aptitude for teaching. It’s an issue that requires attention and, much more than that, it requires action”. (Extract from Minister’s speech at the official opening of a new fitness suite at the Institute of Technology, Athlone on 10th February, 2003)

7. International

7.1. Graz Convention

The EUA Convention of Higher Education Institutions was held in Graz from 29-31 May, 2003. C.H.I.U. was represented at the Convention by Dr. Downer who chaired a Theme I Working Group, and Professor McQuillan who acted as rapporteur for Theme III QA. The Convention was organised as an important contribution to the Bologna Process and preparation for the Berlin Conference of Ministers to be held in September. The five main Graz themes were:-

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|-----------|--|
| Theme I | European Higher Education in a Globalised World |
| Theme II | Revisiting the Links Between Teaching and Research |
| Theme III | Consolidating a Quality Culture in Europe's Universities |
| Theme IV | Improving Institutional Governance and Management |
| Theme V | Pushing Forward Bologna and Prague |

7.2. Bologna Process

A presentation was made to the Graz Convention on a report on "*Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education III*". The report seeks to capture the most important recent trends related to the Bologna reforms and is a follow up to the two Trends Reports which were written for the Bologna Conference in 1999 and Prague Conference in 2001. It reflects the perspectives of students, employers, higher education institutions, rectors conferences and Ministries of Higher Education. The report notes that although awareness of the Bologna Process across Europe has increased considerably during the last two years, reforms have yet to reach the majority of the higher education grass roots representatives who are supposed to implement them. Ireland is mentioned as one of six countries where deliberations on institutional reforms are even less widespread than in the other Bologna signatory countries.

Through participation in the DES Bologna Steering Group C.H.I.U. has had in input into the Irish Government Report on the Bologna Process. As part of a more committed engagement DES is organising a Bologna conference on 23rd July 2003.

Diploma Supplement: The C.H.I.U. subcommittee has made good progress towards agreeing the format and the data required to constitute the Irish Universities Diploma Supplement.

ECTS: Professor D. McQuillan has been nominated as one of the Irish experts on the European network for ECTS. There is to be a meeting in September hosted by NQAI and representatives from each university is requested.

Engineers: The IEI has brought their discussion document on their proposed '3+2' accreditation model to the proposal stage. The Registrars' Group has considered a response to the IEI proposal prepared by the Deans of Engineering. It was agreed that C.H.I.U. would seek a meeting with the IEI to discuss the concerns of the Universities. Registrars noted that difficulties and disadvantages of conforming to a single model such as the three year degree structure include the incompatibility of Socrates exchanges with three year programmes, the funding issues, the fundamental difference between the technical/science programmes with their foundation first year and the Arts/Humanities programmes, and the difference between the second level systems in the different EU states.

Bologna Awareness: The Registrars have agreed that the Bologna issue would be raised in all the universities at Academic Council level to increase awareness and to discuss strategy for the future.

8. NCCA

8.1. *Developing Senior Cycle Education*

Minister Dempsey, according to media reports, has turned his attention from university fees to reform of the Leaving Certificate. This development is related to continuing concerns about the effect of the Points System on the education of students at Senior Cycle. The Report of Commission on the Points System 1999 recommended a review of the Leaving Certificate (established) as an educational programme. It held that such a review should be fundamental and address matters including the nature of the senior cycle experience, curricular breadth and balance and the broadening of assessment approaches. These issues were taken up by the NCCA and it recently published a document entitled *Developing Senior Cycle Education: Consultative Paper on Issues and Options*. [Full text available online at www.ncca.ie]. It presents ideas about the future of the senior cycle of post-primary education in Ireland. The paper is part of a process of consultation through which the NCCA is seeking the views of students, parents, teachers and other interested individuals and groups, as to how the senior cycle should develop and be shaped into the future.

The senior cycle has been a focus of considerable change and development in the last ten years. The diversification of senior cycle provision in the 1990s resulted in the emergence of Transition Year, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied as recognised programmes. The consultative paper provides an opportunity to take stock of these and other developments in education and to engage in an exercise of foresight regarding future developments in senior cycle education.

As part of the consultative process, those interested are invited to complete an Online Questionnaire Survey, and to encourage others to do so. A copy of the Questionnaire Survey can be downloaded from the NCCA website. The consultative process proposed in the senior cycle paper includes a National Forum on Senior Cycle Education to take place in the Autumn of 2003. There are other strands in the consultation process including consultative meetings, seminars and meetings between the NCCA and the education partners. The NCCA has written to C.H.I.U. proposing a meeting to discuss issues raised by the senior cycle paper and the issues paper. The NCCA Paper suggests for consideration 4 options for developing senior cycle education:

- *Option One – The Status Quo*
The four senior cycle programmes retain their independence and maintain their current relationships with each other.
- *Option Two – Leaving Certificate (established) and LCVP Merge*
A new senior cycle programme is developed combining the best features of the Leaving Certificate (established) and the LCVP. The transition Year and LCA retain their ring-fencing.

- *Option Three – A Three-Year Senior Cycle*
A new three-year senior cycle programme would be developed combining the best features of the Transition Year, the Leaving Certificate (established) and the LCVP. The LCA retains its ring-fencing.
- *Option Four – A Unified Senior Cycle Programme*
A new three-year senior cycle programme would be developed combining the best features of all existing programmes. This is the only option presented that abandons the ring fencing of the LCA.

8.2. *Leaving Cert and UCAS*

UCAS and the NCCA are involved in conducting a comparability study between the Leaving Certificate and the GCE A level. Three subjects chosen for benchmarking are Chemistry, English and Mathematics. While the focus of the project is the placing of the Leaving Cert on the UCAS tariff, the results could have implications for CAO points awarded for GCE A levels for entry to Irish Universities.

9. *Copyright*

The Copyright Group considered further correspondence from the ICLA which sought to justify the fee rate of € per student plus VAT, clarify the scope of the license on offer, explain the usefulness of the ICLA Scheme and the ICLA position in relation to electronic copying and set out arrangements for a self-auditing monitoring system. An agreed response to the ICLA is being prepared.