

C.H.I.U. Review [04/4] for C.H.I.U. Meetings in NUIG on 16th November, 2004

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1. Research

1.1. Science Foundation Ireland

1.1.1. AOIP Proposals and Review

The VP/Deans of Research and Finance Officers Groups met on a number of occasions over the summer period to respond to the SFI imposition of the AOIP. A proposal coordinated by C.H.I.U. from the universities along with RCSI, DIT and CIT was submitted to SFI in July and as a result SFI produced their final documentation for the AOIP (proposal and review form) in August. Right up to the submission deadline there were still a number of outstanding issues not satisfactorily explained by SFI.

The introduction of the AOIP has raised a number of serious issues for the universities which have long term implications, these include:

- The AOIP process has redefined what an overhead is. The generally accepted understanding of an overhead is that it is not always traceable (in an auditing context) to last cent. It has now been necessary for some admin staff to prepare timesheets so that the expenditure will be traceable - this creates an overhead on the overhead. The new SFI definition requires audit traceability not currently available.
- There are three parties to SFI research arrangements - the PIs, SFI and the universities. The way this relationship works is such that PIs engage directly with SFI and in effect treat SFI as their sponsor and employer and do not engage in a positive and proactive manner with the University. SFI in turn engages positively and proactively with the PIs, the Heads of the institutions but do not engage in a constructive or proactive way with the realities of delivering essential services to PIs.
- The structure of AOIP advisory groups is such that PIs have been cast in the role of being able to veto realistic essential services. In other words if PIs don't like what they see they won't endorse it and will expect their colleagues not to endorse it. There is a lack of reality on the part of PIs about what the real cost is of delivering an appropriate service to the PIs.
- Service level agreements for SFI activity are now being driven by SFI in such a way that the universities provide a certain (exclusive) level of service to the SFI PIs. In the context of the tripartite relationship outlined above, SFI should be a party to the service level agreement. The university should be entitled to rely on consistent policies from SFI in relation to a wide variety of matters and SFI would be in a position to provide clarification on issues which are required from time to time. Historically SFI has been neither consistent nor in a position to provide appropriate clarifications when requested to do so thus giving rise to major additional workloads.

- Service level agreements for SFI activity rather than all activity may give rise to different levels of service for different activities because they are resourced differently. It may give rise to SFI PIs receiving priority over all other staff/activity thus creating first and second class researchers.
- The AOIP process, with the new definition of overhead with the addition of strategic initiatives is such that there is a tension between essential services and strategic initiatives. The strategic initiatives in this instance are initiatives which are intended to "build up the research infrastructure". These strategic initiatives have been interpreted by most of the universities as science-based initiatives which in different times might have been construed to be "direct" costs. The tension now arising between essential services and strategic initiatives is such that the aspiration of the research community is to minimise essential services while enhancing the science strategic investment. If this happens the implications are clear:
 - If overhead/indirect costs can not be directly traced in an auditable fashion they will still have to be met and the only source of funding is the teaching budget.
 - A further question for the sector is whether this research can be sustained on his basis - we should refer here to the OECD publication "On the Edge" by Dr. Jim Port. The sustainability of research in the long-term will be dependent on the extent to which it can meet its own costs.
- SFI will compare and contrast the costs of essential services and may well "pitch the universities against one another" in the context of the lowest cost.
- In the current AOIP process it is important that someone other than SFI reviews and compares the host institution investments in essential services vis-a-vis strategic initiatives. This review will very clearly indicate the extent to which there is a clear understanding of the need to meet the real costs of essential services.
- Where the essential services claim from SFI falls considerably short of 30% the universities are indicating that the 30% that SFI provided previously was too high.
- Where host institutions have received 30% on previous occasions and essential services are only a fraction of this and/or the indirect costs of research are being subsidised by the teaching budget there is the possibility of questions being raised with the University Heads in their individual capacities by the HEA and/or Comptroller & Auditor General.
- Long-term questions include:
 1. Are the increasing levels of research sustainable on the basis of the current AOIP process?
 2. Can teaching continue to subsidise some of the non-traceable indirect costs associated with research?
 3. How will these matters be viewed by SFI, HEA and C&AG?

These questions need to be answered in the context of research income that has nearly doubled in the last three years and likely to double again in the next five years.

- In considering all the issues set out above it needs to be borne in mind that Irish universities do not have information systems developed to the same level as those that pertain in the UK and the US in terms of traceability of individual items associated with particular activities. Any suggestion that full cost tracking systems be implemented is not something that can be achieved in the short-term.
- The introduction of the AOIP process has been one introduced by SFI despite the agreement in 2003 by Government to the overhead report by Forfas/HEA. With this changed approach by SFI through the introduction of the AOIP the question must now be asked - what impact will this have on other sponsors of research in Irish Universities?

1.1.2. SFI Evaluation Team Meeting

Forfás has been asked by the Department of Enterprise to organize an evaluation of Science Foundation Ireland. The international committee overseeing the evaluation (chaired by Professor Sir Richard Brook) held meetings on 4th and 5th November in Dublin. These consisted of discussions with SFI staff, researchers and other stakeholders. A number of senior university staff met the group on 5th November. The meeting was an informal discussion although C.H.I.U. had submitted in advance a draft agenda for discussion.

1.1.3. Electronic Submission

SFI have been working on an electronic submission system and there has been some testing of this within the universities through the research offices. It is noteworthy that they have not consulted with either of the two funding agencies (IRCSET and HRB) that currently have an e-submission system in place. Nor have they taken lessons from the European Commission's online system (EPSS) for Framework Six. There are a number of features that are unacceptable to the universities. For example, the system would require that every proposal is submitted by one designated person for each university. We have discussed this with the VP/Deans of Research and Research Officers Group and made it clear to SFI that the system in its current form is unacceptable to the universities and will not be used. SFI have agreed to meet the groups to discuss the options.

1.2. Research Strategy – C.H.I.U. Conference – Strength and Numbers: attracting and retaining postgraduate researchers in Irish universities

The VPDOR group has been working on a university wide strategy on research that produced the Research Strategy policy document approved earlier this year at C.H.I.U. Council. In the meantime a working group was established to take fully into account Arts Humanities and Social Sciences. The output from the IUQB expert meeting on PhD training will also be incorporated into the strategy. As the next step in the process we held a conference on 9/10 November, “*Strength and Numbers: attracting and retaining postgraduate researchers in Irish universities*”. From a strategic point of view this can be considered as a response of the universities to the recommendations of the OECD review - focusing on what we can do rather than asking the government to take action

1.3. *European Policy*

1.3.1. *Dutch Presidency – “Brain Gain” European Conference, The Hague, September 29-30 2004.*

This conference will focus on European and national initiatives to encourage greater mobility of researchers (<http://www.braingain-instruments.nl/>). Dr. Conor O’Carroll gave a presentation on how Ireland and in particular the universities are attracting and retaining researchers.

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

Three working groups were established in 2003 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 report, *Building Ireland’s Knowledge Economy: a national action plan for Ireland to 2010* was published in August and sets Ireland’s target as 2.5% of GDP on R&D by 2010. It has been given further impetus by the new Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Mr. Michéal Martin, TD, in a number of recent speeches.

1.4. *All Island Research Portal – expertiseireland*

A major milestone was reached in October when the number of expert profiles being contributed to the portal exceeded 3,000. The breakdown of the profiles being contributed per institute as of 31st October, 2004, is as follows - DCU 385; DIT 568; NUIG 72; NUIM 74; QUB 406; UCC 230; TCD 46; UL 146; UU 529

The Institutes of Technology have committed to contributing expert profiles to the portal from early 2005. To date there have been in excess of 21,000 visits and 25,000 searches with over 200 experts contacted through the portal. The top ten search terms are as follows – Nanotechnology, Cancer, Biomedical, Science, Engineering, Chemistry, Bioinformatics, Biotechnology, Food Storage, Vocal cord paralysis.

1.5. *EU Sixth Framework Programme*

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

Ireland continues to be highly successful in the Marie Curie Programme. In the recent Transfer of Knowledge Scheme, Ireland submitted more proposals (54) and had the highest number of successful projects (14) than any other country. It is estimated that this Call alone represents €8 million to Irish research groups out of a total available European budget of €45 million. Ireland also had 2 successful applicants in the highly competitive Excellence Grants out of a total of 20 Europe-wide. Interestingly, both were in the Humanities.

The C.H.I.U. Research Office is working closely with the European Commission in planning the Marie Curie Programme for FP7.

C.H.I.U. has been working with the D.E.T.E. and Enterprise Ireland to ensure a dedicated service is provided to Irish Industry in the Marie Curie Programme. Enterprise Ireland has agreed to a full-time individual to work with C.H.I.U. on industry involvement in the programme.

1.5.2. *Launch of the Irish Mobility Centre and Web Portal*

Jennifer Cleary joined C.H.I.U. on the 22nd September as Project Co-ordinator for the Researcher's Mobility Hub~Ireland. The launch took place on the 10th November, on the second day of the C.H.I.U. Conference, "Strength and Numbers".

Ireland's Researcher's Mobility Portal – www.researchcareersireland.com offers researchers, who are undertaking research positions either in Ireland or in a new country, comprehensive and up-to-date information and assistance in all matters relating to their professional and daily lives.

The first Network meeting of University representatives who deal with researcher mobility issues will take place in the C.H.I.U. office at the end of November. Each member will be asked to return a Signed Declaration of commitment between the Mobility Hub and their corresponding university. The Network will meet on a six monthly basis thereafter.

1.5.3. *Developing a common approach on Knowledge/Technology Transfer for the Universities*

Recently there has been much focus on the issue of technology/knowledge transfer within the universities. This has come from a number of sources beginning with the Enterprise Strategy Group and most recently with the OECD review (in particular the ICT Ireland report is highly critical of the universities). All of these reports have one thing in common in that they all state clearly that our technology transfer operations must improve. Some would like to see the operation taken out of the universities and run centrally by one or more of our state agencies. In particular Science Foundation Ireland is thinking of creating its own central resource to identify and protect IP arising exclusively from SFI funded projects.

The opportunity is clearly there for the universities to take action and work together to address this issue. There is the opportunity to explore if the universities should establish their own central service to support this activity. Following a meeting of the Heads of all 9 universities the Board of InterTrade Ireland seems willing to fund a feasibility study on an all island basis to this end; this is a clear opportunity to investigate as a sector.

There was a meeting in C.H.I.U. on 5th November to discuss this with VP/Deans of Research and ILO's from universities North and South. It was agreed to prepare a draft Terms of Reference for such a feasibility study to submit to InterTrade Ireland in November.

1.6. *Committee on Research Infrastructure*

A number of SFI researchers have been lobbying on a wide range of issues related to research infrastructure. The RIA has held two "N+N" meetings on this issue and as a consequence the HEA has established a steering group. The group held its first meeting on 12th October and the C.H.I.U. was represented by Jim Browne and Conor O'Carroll. There were also representative from DIT, CODIT, RCSI, SFI researchers and other funding agencies. The discussion focused on the provision of research infrastructure emphasizing the need for greater coordination between the various funding agencies.

2. University Funding

2.1. HEA Recurrent Funding Model

At the Council meeting on 14th June, 2004 Dr. John Hegarty, Chair of the C.H.I.U. Working Group established to consider the HEA proposals reported that the Group had considered a briefing paper prepared by C.H.I.U. Secretariat. The Group noted in particular the following points:-

- Concern that the HEA was pursuing the introduction of a new funding model prior to completion of the OECD's report and in advance of the Government's response.
- Concern that the model promoted strategic funding at the expense of, and separate from, core funding.
- Absence of evaluation of the shortcomings of the current funding model, some of which are central to the new model proposed by the HEA. These included the methodology adopted, the inherent lack of transparency within the model and the level of HEA resources and expertise required to support the model.
- The model did not address the quantum of funding for the sector but focused only on reallocation of funding.
- There appeared to be an over - reliance on the unit cost system and concern that it represented a 'recipe for impoverishment' by its narrow focus which rewarded those universities with the lowest costs each year without regard to other factors.
- The basis for HEA research funding in the core grant and the related complexities of identifying appropriate measures of research activity were considered.
- Potential impact on the model of transfer of IoTs to the HEA would be a matter for future consideration.

Dr. Hegarty said that the Group had identified a number of underlying principles which should inform the development of a funding model. The Council adopted the principles as follows:-

- The funding model would be linked to the strategic plan of a university which can set out its objectives and goals including its response to national and regional policies and targets.
- The existing strategic initiatives should be incorporated into the core grant
- The funding model should have built-in rewards aimed at promoting government policies and targets through incentive/performance-based funding.
- Formula-based recurrent funding for the block grant would be sought which would provide a transparent and rational basis for allocations to institutions and promote stability in institutional funding levels.
- The block grant could be determined on the following basis:
funding per student – the funding rate would be based on different student categories, for example to take account of level - undergraduate, postgraduate, PhD etc.
- Flexibility/ performance-related funding would also be incorporated enabling institutions to tailor their participation in programmes in the context of their strategic plans, rather than a 'one-size fits all' approach to all funding initiatives.
- The autonomy of the institutions should continue to be preserved as is the case under the current model, with universities having discretion over the internal allocation of funds.
- How to fund research required further consideration as part of the funding model having regard to the current lack of clarity and huge growth in research activity.
- The principle of an annual funding agreement between each university and the HEA should also be incorporated. Statements on achievement of university objectives should

form part of the annual report to the HEA which would be reviewed in the consultation and decision making process on annual funding

The Council also supported the proposal by the Group for an innovation / reform funding package. Such a scheme / fund would operate separately from but be complementary to the agreed university / HEA plan for budget funding.

Having regard to the pending OECD Report which was expected to make recommendations on funding it was agreed that a meeting be sought with the HEA to discuss C.H.I.U. views rather than sending a written response. An informal meeting was held with the HEA Executive on 22nd June, 2004.

The OECD Report of the Review of Higher Education in Ireland commented extensively on university recurrent funding and the HEA proposals for a revised funding model thereby justifying the C.H.I.U. view that consideration of the HEA proposals should await the OECD Report.

The HEA held a seminar of the Review of Recurrent Funding Mechanism on 11th October, 2004. Presentations were made by Dr. Don Thornhill, Dr. Aims McGuinness and Dr. Jim Port.

2.2. *The Financial Position of Irish Universities*

The HEA published a report *The Financial Position of Irish Universities [at 30th September, 2003]* on 9th September, 2004. It comprehensively debunks suspicions and allegations that universities were over-funded and that they had large reserves of cash. It found that –

- the creation of surpluses is essential to enable universities to accumulate cash for strategic investments in academic staff and infrastructure,
- the level of surplus achieved by Irish universities is inadequate to allow them to maintain their physical infrastructure in a fit condition for modern higher education,
- the universities should plan to hold in the region of 46 to 60 days income in the form of cash to enable them to respond to opportunities and risks, and to manage their day-to-day cash flow in an efficient manner,
- the universities need some security and stability in their public funding to facilitate this strategic financial planning,
- the universities also need to be assured that their efforts in generating additional non-state income will not be penalised by corresponding reductions in government funding,
- the new consolidated university accounts (while an accurate accounting record according with the best international standards) could be misleading in terms of providing accessible forward-planning information for the universities and funding agencies,
- the treatment of depreciation, which is a real cost to the universities but is not funded by the government, needs to be interpreted carefully,
- there is a danger that this can lead those unfamiliar with the accounting details to believe that the universities are not maintaining their assets on a sustainable basis.

The Report's recommendations supported the findings and recommendations of the OECD Report and the Kelly Report on infrastructure and they received positive media coverage.

2.3. *Recurrent Funding 2005*

The underfunding of universities has now been highlighted in three recent reports – the OECD *Review of Higher Education in Ireland*, *The Financial Position of Irish Universities*, and the *Report of the Capital Review and Prioritisation Working Group*. Minister Dempsey publicly accepted the finding of the OECD Report that universities were underfunded and undertook to seek additional state funding while ruling out return to the payment of tuition fees by students. On foot of discussions by the C.H.I.U. Working Group on the OECD Report, C.H.I.U. Chairman wrote to the Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin, T.D., in relation to recurrent, capital and research funding for 2005. The Minister was also pressed by C.H.I.U. representatives on the issue of increased funding for C.H.I.U. at a meeting with her on 29th October, 2004.

2.4. *Capital Funding*

Following a media leak of findings of the Kelly Group, C.H.I.U. Chair wrote to Minister Dempsey on 16th July, 2004 requesting early publication of the Report. The HEA published the “*Report of the Capital Review and Prioritisation Working Group*” on 17th September, 2004 having already approved its recommendations in late September, 2004. The HEA summarised the Report as proposing:-

- a ten-year expenditure programme totalling €33 million,
- the programme is to be broken into two phases of five years each with each phase broken further into two sub-phases of two and a half years each,
- a capital minor works programme costing €60 million per annum, in order to successfully maintain into the future the existing capital stock and to prevent the accumulation of the capital deficit evident from the report,
- an equipment renewal programme costing €50 million (€30 million from capital and €20 million from recurrent sources) annually as a contribution towards an estimated €75 million cost of equipment renewal, in order to safeguard the quality of teaching and research in the sector,
- a review of the entire capital programme in year four of the ten-year period.

The €17 million of the €33 million expenditure which is specifically designated for universities falls far short of the investment required to meet the government national objective of ensuring that the Irish higher education sector is in the top rank of OECD countries.

The Kelly Group held a Plenary session for representatives of higher education institutions on 18th October, 2004. The Group Chairman’s assertion that Report’s recommendation had been informed and driven by a strategic approach was not supported by explanations of the methodology and process adopted by the Group. A paper setting out views on the Report was finalised by C.H.I.U. following its circulation to universities for comments, and sent to the HEA and copied to DES.

2.5. *Tuition Undergraduate Fees Levels 2004/05*

In August, DES sanctioned a tuition fee increase of 7% (in contrast with the increase sought by C.H.I.U. of 9.25%.) The increase does not apply to the student services charge which was arbitrarily increased by the Minister for Education and Science in November 2003 by €80 per student for the 2004/05 academic year.

2.6. Pensions Issues

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

The C.H.I.U. Working Group on Pensions met with the HEA, DES and Department of Finance (DoF) on 29th June 2004 with the intention of submitting the above draft scheme for new employees (effective from a future date to be determined). The new scheme will apply to all new university employees irrespective of whether the existing pension schemes are funded or unfunded. DoF stated that further revisions arising from recommendations from the Commission on Public Service Pensions were at an advanced stage and the universities were advised that any submission should take account of these. As a result, the draft scheme was not submitted. A further meeting was held on 27th October. DoF had no further developments to report as the revisions had not yet been formally approved. Discussions were held in relation to provisions on added years and early retirement. The model for the related Spouses and Children's Scheme is also being reviewed by DoF at present.

A briefing paper on the scheme has been prepared for the universities and will be circulated for consideration with the draft scheme when it is updated to take account of the revisions noted above.

2.6.2. Funding of Pension Schemes

C.H.I.U. has been actively engaged for some time in seeking a meeting with the Department of Finance and the HEA on funding issues relating to pensions. At the meeting on 27th October, the HEA acknowledged the need for a meeting and have committed to respond by early December to the request for a meeting.

2.6.3. Fixed Term Workers Act 2003

In the continued absence of any guidelines from HEA/DES on implementation of the Act which came into effect on 1st July 2003, there are two central aspects which the universities are seeking to address in the context of a) university and b) research staff. In the case of university staff:

- 1) **Entitlements:** Under the Act, a fixed term worker cannot be treated less favourably than a comparable permanent employee and all staff therefore on fixed term contracts need to be assessed to determine if they could be entitled to a range of benefits including pension and maternity, sick leave, redundancy.
- 2) **Funding:** In the case of staff employed by the universities, the related costs will have to be met through recurrent funding. In contrast to the Part-Time Workers Act, no funding has been provided by the HEA to date and the HEA's position on the issue is not clear. Cost estimates are currently being prepared by the universities to inform a case to be made.

The situation is more complex in relation to researchers employed on fixed term contracts. The HR Officers Group has commenced preparation of a guidance document for staff involved in recruitment of research staff to assist in assessing the potential entitlements conferred by the particular arrangements. The complexity is exacerbated by the fact that funding for potential costs has not been provided for in most cases under existing contractual arrangements in place with research sponsors.

In light of the magnitude of the potential liability for the universities (particularly in relation to pensions) on an ongoing and retrospective basis, a Working Group was convened on 21st

June 2004 and actuarial advice sought. Following from this, on 9th August 2004, Dr. Wrixon as C.H.I.U. Chair, wrote to the major Irish research sponsors advising of issues involved and flagging the need for financial provision by the sponsors.

It is imperative that guidelines for recruitment of research staff (to incorporate financial provisions required) be finalised as soon as possible by the HR Officers in consultation with the Working Group and other stakeholders in order to facilitate engagement with the major research sponsors to secure funding and in particular with the HEA in its role as funder for both teaching and research.

2.7. Nursing

2.7.1. Transfer of Midwifery and Paediatric Education to Third Level

On 3rd September 2004, following a request from the Department of Health and Children, a meeting was held with university representatives to discuss the transfer of midwifery and paediatric education to third level institutions (as applicable) from October 2005. The development followed from the establishment of the Expert Group on Midwifery and Paediatric Nurse Education. The Department's proposal was broadly outlined at the meeting and the universities undertook to revert with a sectoral submission on the transfer.

Following intensive consultations within the universities, the submission was made on 3rd November on the following key principles:

- 1) The Department was seeking transfer of the two programmes within the existing nursing student quota of 1640. In the case of midwifery, this was not considered feasible by the sector given the stand-alone nature of the programme. For Paediatric education, it was noted that it might be locally feasible for some universities but not across the sector.
- 2) The Department stated at the meeting that limited funding would be considered for equipment but not for capital facilities. The submission makes it clear however that provision for capital funding is definitely required.
- 3) Resources are required immediately if the necessary preparations for the programmes are to be completed on time.
- 4) The funding plan is in line overall with that agreed for the original nursing degree programme and seeks recurrent funding on a per student basis together with funding provisions for staff assimilation and development.
- 5) The submission also flags transitional issues to be addressed for the existing postgraduate diploma courses in both areas.

2.7.2. Undergraduate Nursing Degree Programme – Rostered Year

The Department engaged Deloitte & Touche to review staffing issues relating to the rostered year provided for under the degree programme and a number of issues were identified relating to arrangements (which are being implemented for the first time). Local working groups have been established to work with the Department to review these issues and seek to resolve them.

2.8. Procurement Developments

2.8.1. Tender for Photocopying Services

Six universities are participating in a collaborative contact for photocopying services. Tender evaluation is in the final stages and it is hoped that a service provider will be appointed in January 2005.

2.8.2. Sectoral Guidelines on procurement of research equipment and environmental purchasing

The Procurement Group is developing a series of sectoral guidance documents for university staff to assist in particular areas of purchasing. It is anticipated that the two documents on purchasing of research equipment and environmental purchasing will be circulated within universities before the year end.

2.8.3. Seminar on Purchasing of Information Technology

The Procurement Group has organised a seminar in UL on 24th & 25th November for the Computer Centre Directors to discuss aspects of procurement including achieving value for money and supplier relationships.

2.8.4. Access to Electronic Journals – IRel Initiative

It was announced in August that the HEA and SFI are to invest up to €20m in a joint initiative to provide enhanced access to a range of electronic journals. The project is being co-ordinated through the C.H.I.U. Librarian's Group and it is anticipated that significant economies of scale will be achieved by centralising administration and purchasing. Between 2004-2008 SFI is expected to contribute up to €9m (decreasing over the four years) with the HEA providing the balance of €11.25m and assuming full funding responsibility from 2008 [see para. 12.2].

3. HEA Issues

3.1. Salary Flexibility/Tenure

At its June meeting, the Council considered proposals which set out some options for providing flexibility in relation to the salary and appointment conditions for SFI Fellows. There was consensus that urgent action was required to deal with this issue as it would be a major factor in enabling the universities to retain SFI Senior Fellows beyond their initial five years. To this end, the Council proposed that the agreed Framework between the Universities and the Higher Education Authority for Departures from Approved Levels of Remuneration, Fee, Allowances and Expenses for University Employees under Section 25(5)(a) be amended. The amendment should provide for the following procedure:-

That a departure from approved salary levels is allowable for a permanent appointment in the case where a university and the HEA agree –

- (a) that the appointment is in an area (discipline) of declared national priority,
- (b) that the appointment is made or confirmed following a demanding internationally benchmarked and independent vetting procedure,
- (c) that an organisation, other than the HEA, has undertaken to provide funds to meet the full additional cost of the departure for the period of the appointment,
- (d) that continuance of approval for the departure arrangement is subject to three or five yearly reviews which would confirm compliance with (a) above and performance in line with demanding international benchmarking.

C.H.I.U. Chair wrote to the HEA Chair informing him of the above C.H.I.U. position and explained that the arrangement proposed would be expressed so as to have generic application.

Further discussion took place with the HEA following which the HEA authorised the HEA Executive to agree with the universities on amendment to the Agreed Framework for Departures from Approved Remuneration Levels according to the principles set out in an outline proposal supported by C.H.I.U. Council Members. The HEA is drafting an amendment for agreement with the universities.

3.2. *Statistical Returns*

Staff: The Council noted at its meeting on 14th June, 2004 correspondence from DES which emphasised the importance of accurate and timely returns on staff numbers being made to the HEA by the universities.

Students: The HEA advised that the new Student Records System to replace the traditional method of statistics collection was fully in place and tested with a full return made by NUIG. The HEA requested that other universities make their full returns for 2004 by end October.

3.3. *Code of Practice for the Governance of Third Level Institutions*

A revised draft code has been received from DES following consultation with C.H.I.U. which takes account of university governance and legislative arrangements explicitly for the first time. It makes a clear distinction between universities and institutes and does not seek to impose additional compliance or reporting procedures on universities.

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

The HEA sought a meeting with UCFOG on 6th October 2004 ostensibly to discuss the recommendation in the ‘Financial Position of Irish Universities’ report that the complexity of the new financial statement format would be made more understandable to stakeholders. However the discussion focussed almost solely on issues which had been previously raised by the C&AG. In spite of the considerable scrutiny and analysis that university financial information was subjected to in 2004 as part of the review by the three independent experts, it was a matter of concern that the HEA’s approach seemed to be driven more by a public funding perspective than any desire to discuss substantive financial reporting issues particularly in the context of those still unresolved (for example FRS17 which hinges on responsibility for university pension liabilities). As required under the Universities Act, the universities will soon be submitting templates of their reporting format for 2002/03 to the HEA for sign off. C&AG audits are expected shortly in a number of universities.

4. *Higher Education Policy/Strategy*

4.1. *Higher Education Colloquium*

DES convened a Colloquium of representatives of DES, HEA, C.H.I.U. and CODIT on 24th August, 2004. The Colloquium was attended by Minister Dempsey and C.H.I.U. was represented by Dr. G. Wrixon, Dr. J. Hegarty, Dr. F. von Prondzynski and M. McGrath. The purpose of the colloquium was declared to be to identify common grounds and points of agreement on the way forward from a review of the submissions made by each of the parties to the OECD Review. The Colloquium was facilitated by Dr. Eddie Molloy.

In relation to funding the Minister agreed, in the context of the 2005 Estimates campaign, that DES would immediately consult with the HEA, C.H.I.U. and CODIT on the development of proposals for the creation of an 'innovation fund' for the full higher education sector to support change efforts. In relation to the OECD Review the Minister wished the Colloquium process to continue in the context of the OECD Report implementation.

4.2. **OECD Report – “Review of Higher Education in Ireland”**

The OECD Report was launched on 17th September, 2004. C.H.I.U. representatives attended a briefing session given by members of the Review Team in Dublin Castle. The Report contains 52 recommendations. The Report received extensive media coverage.

A C.H.I.U. Working Group has been set up to formulate a sectoral response to the OECD recommendations. It comprises Mr. P.Teahon, Chair; Dr. F.von Prodnzynski, Vice-Chair; Dr. P.Nolan, UCD; Mr. J.O'Connor, UL; Dr. F.Mulligan, NUIM; Prof. J.Browne, NUIG; Prof. A.Hyland, UCC; Prof. J.Murray, TCD and Mr. M.McGrath, Dr. C.O'Carroll and Ms. S.Harkin, C.H.I.U. The discussion at the first meeting focussed on the need to ensure increasing university funding for 2005 resulting in the C.H.I.U. letter of 22nd October, 2004 being sent to Minister Hanafin.

Minister Hanafin has responded to questions in the Dáil on the OECD Report and spoke about bringing proposals to government shortly on an implementation process and priorities. At her meeting with C.H.I.U. on 29th October, 2004 in response to requests for early action on implementation, she proposed that as a first step the colloquium on higher education held in August [see 4.1. above] be reconvened.

4.3. **Enterprise Strategy Group**

The Enterprise Strategy Group Report – “Ahead of the Curve” was launched in July 2004. Some of the important points relating to higher education made in the Report were –

- the rapid pace of technological development and the increasing sophistication of business processes and systems now demand higher levels of academic achievement and greater links between the education sector and enterprise than ever before,
- Ireland should recognise the necessity of both upskilling the general workforce and achieving distinction in the quality of graduates from higher education,
- governance of higher education must be reviewed to enable flexible responses to the increasing pace of change in the environment,
- it will be necessary to increase the number and quality of higher education graduates at all levels,
- new approaches to the funding of higher education are needed,
- priority must be given to defining the differentiated but complementary roles of the universities and the institutes of technology.

Key recommendations are –

- *Quantity and Quality of Graduates and Post-graduates:* the proportion of graduates in Ireland should be in the top decile of OECD countries and the quality of awards from the Irish higher education sector should be benchmarked internationally,
- *Increase Applied R&D Funding:* Public funding for applied research and in-firm R&D should be progressively increased to match that invested by the Department of

Enterprise, Trade and Employment in basic research. This includes support for in-firm capability development, commercialisation, cluster-led academic research and innovation partnerships.

- *Recommendation – ‘One Step Up’ Initiative:* Establish a national ‘One Step Up’ initiative, facilitated by the National Framework of Qualifications to encourage greater participation in ongoing learning.

4.4. Access

As a follow-up to her presentation on Access at the Plenary on 5th April, 2004 Professor Áine Hyland, UCC, on behalf of the C.H.I.U. Access Working Group, joined the Council Meeting on 14th June, 2004 and presented an interim report.

The Council agreed that the C.H.I.U. proposal for a sectoral scheme for tackling access by disadvantaged students to universities on a national basis should include the following two approaches:-

Approach 1 – extend the current approach, in five of the seven universities, which targets only students in designated disadvantaged schools to include students from non-designated schools, provided that adequate resources were made available to universities to extend their current programmes and to provide support for students who were successful in gaining entry under the extended scheme.

Approach 2 - as suggested in the April Discussion Paper to the Council, the use of the single indicator of “students who are granted exemption by the Department of Education and Science from paying the Leaving Certificate examination fees”. This indicator effectively applies to children of families who hold a medical card which roughly speaking, are families with an annual income level of not more than €13,000 p.a.

The Council confirmed its preference for Approach 2 but agreed that a proposal including both approaches should be actively pursued by representatives of the C.H.I.U. Access Working Group through –

- informal discussions with the Head of the National Access Office to win support, and
- informal discussions with relevant DES officials with a view discerning whether a joint DES/C.H.I.U. initiative was possible.

Discussions were held with the National Access Office and DES officials. The National Access Office Advisory Council considered the proposal and agreed to support Approach 2. DES are currently examining the proposal with a view to making a submission to the new Minister.

The HEA/National Access Office have published a Report *Towards a National Strategy*. It is described as an initial review of HEA targeted initiatives to widen access to higher education. Current initiatives to widen access to four targeted, under-represented groups are mapped out in the Report. The impact of the targeted initiatives scheme is examined and key issues, findings and conclusions and recommendations for the future are presented.

The HEA/National Access Office are holding a conference “*Achieving Equity of Access to Higher Education*” on 6th & 7th December, 2004 in Kilkenny. A three-year action plan will be launched at the conference by the Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin, T.D., and implementation of the plan is to begin immediately. The aim of the conference is two-fold:-

- to create dialogue and debate on the challenges facing us over the next three years if we are to achieve equity of access to higher education,
- to begin work on a practical agenda to implement the action plan.

4.5. *International Students*

4.5.1. *Internationalisation of Irish Education Services – Report of Interdepartmental Working Group*

Some contents of the above report were revealed in the media in early October but the Report has still not been published. Some of the main recommendations are reported to be as follows:-

- establish a new body to be called “Education Ireland” on a statutory basis with specified functions in a range of areas including responsibility for the award of the Education Ireland Quality Mark, the operation of a code of conduct for the pastoral care of international students and the certification of EFL schools,
- all personnel in IEBI and ACELS to be incorporated into Education Ireland which should act as the central agency responsible for the promotion of Ireland as a centre of educational excellence,
- the medium-term aim for Education Ireland should be to become self-financing, through a combination of a gradual increase in fees and from extra revenue generated by expansion in the market as a result of its activities,
- Education Ireland to establish protocols with Enterprise Ireland and Fáilte Ireland and to work in close co-operation with them to ensure the optimum synergy and co-operation in marketing and promotion,
- individual institutions should also be encouraged to continue marketing and promoting their own programmes under the Education Ireland brand,
- the new agency to be led by an Education Ireland Board, which should be as small in numbers as possible to allow for more effective working.
- the process for awarding the quality mark to further and higher education programmes [in public and private institutions] across a broader range of disciplines should be conducted by the Board in close co-operation with agencies such as FETAC, HETAC, HEA and the relevant institutions which make their won awards under statutory provisions,
- the use of a quality mark by higher education institutions in respect of the delivery of higher education programmes to international students should be based on the implementation of existing quality assurance procedures within the existing quality assurance framework for the sector,
- a code of practice should be developed in consultation with the higher education institutions and be subject to the approval of Education Ireland. Once approved by Education Ireland, and subject to satisfactory quality assurance procedures, signatories to the code, who satisfy the quality assurance procedures, would be eligible to avail of the quality mark in marketing their programmes and recruiting international students

- in recognition of the importance of the development of quality educational services for international students in Ireland, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform should have discretion, supported by a regulatory framework,
 - to establish accelerated visa application procedures for those applying to pursue their studies in a recognised school in receipt of the Education Ireland Quality mark, and
 - to refuse visas for study in institutions that do not have the Quality Mark.

4.5.2. *IDP*

IDP executives held a workshop with representatives of UCC, UCD, NUIG and NUIM and subsequently visited each of the four universities in early July 2004. Arising from the workshop and visits, IDP were to prepare a revised, detailed business plan which would set out clear recruitment targets and the levels of investment required for recruitment and marketing and for international offices and support services in the universities. In September, C.H.I.U. Chair received a letter from IDP stating, with regret, that because the current market environment was extremely volatile globally, the IDP Board had decided not to proceed with new business ventures.

4.5.3. *IEBI*

IEBI in its most recent edition of *International Education News* in October, 2004 reported that there are in total 18,608 international students in the Republic of Ireland, approximately 14,788 of whom originate from outside the EU [11,719 of the total are in universities and recognised colleges]. USA Study Abroad figures for universities are 2,660 ftes, therefore the number of actual American students is higher than this. The total income generated by international students [EU and non-EU] as reported by the institutions was €120 million. IEBI estimates that each student spends an average of €8,800 per year in Ireland on accommodation and other living expenses. This adds a further €56 million to the annual earnings generated by the sector, a total income for the present academic year of just under €276 million. According to the Interdepartmental Report at 4.5.1 above, IEBI is to be subsumed in a new body “Education Ireland”

4.6. *Lifelong Learning*

Information on existing LLL activities has been provided by the universities for the C.H.I.U. Group on Lifelong Learning. Arrangements are to be made for the analysis of the information supplied.

4.7. *Internal Reform*

In recent months there has been regular media coverage of reform proposals in a number of universities which has had a positive impact on politicians [C.H.I.U. Review Media Supplement]. UCC, as Chair of C.H.I.U., is hosting a conference entitled *Irish Universities – The Case for Reform* on 24th & 25th November, 2004. The conference will address change and modernisation in the University sector and the role of Human Resources in facilitating this change. The conference will address issues such as Performance Management and the context for Leadership Development in Higher Education. A central component of the conference will be a debate on the Change Agenda and its relevance/need. Professor Michael Shattock, Rapporteur for the OECD Review of Higher Education in Ireland, has agreed to give the keynote address.

4.8. National Digital Learning Repository

HEA has agreed to provide funding for a joint proposal which seeks to develop a framework to enable development and sharing of digital learning resources between Irish Universities (anticipating potential subsequent roll-out across the Irish HE sector). Specifically it seeks to investigate and pilot a National Digital Learning Repository (DLR) which would consist of a digital learning resource repository, a small set of tools to facilitate easy population of and retrieval from the repository, guidance as to policies and agreements regarding copyright and (re)usage, and methodologies to assist development of (reusable) digital resources. Key challenges, experienced in many other pilot repository systems in other countries, will also be addressed in the DLR project. The proposal will directly address these issues by providing explicit support for best practice in the development and reusability of learning resources, dissemination and 'awareness raising' programmes as well as supporting and nurturing 'subject matter networks' to encourage the submission, vibrant use and successful implementation of the repository. The seven universities are participating in the project which is being co-ordinated by TCD.

5. Communications / Lobbying

Since the last C.H.I.U. Report there has been regular media coverage of university funding and reform issues. [C.H.I.U. Review supplement on media coverage will be circulated at meetings on 16th November, 2004]. University Heads have been pro-active in providing articles and interviews for the media as well as having meetings with politicians, civil servants and state body executives. C.H.I.U. representatives had a very constructive meeting with the Taoiseach on 7th July, 2004. C.H.I.U. representatives also had a positive meeting with Micheál Martin, TD, then Minister for Health and Children. Both Minister Hanafin, at a meeting with C.H.I.U. on 29th October, 2004 [para. 2.3 above], and her predecessor Minister Dempsey at the DES Colloquium on 24th August, 2004 [para. 4.1 above], indicated that the lobbying exercise has had positive results in raising awareness and appreciation of university funding issues with Ministers and other politicians.

A C.H.I.U. delegation comprising Dr. F. von Prondzynski, Vice-Chair; Dr. John Hegarty, Dr. John Hughes, Michael McGrath and Dr. Conor O'Carroll met with the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Science on 9th September, 2004. The Committee was examining research and development. All members of the Committee engaged constructively with the delegation on a wide range of higher education and research issues.

6. Medical Education

Mr. Noel Dempsey, Minister for Education and Science issued a press release on 24th August welcoming proposals he had received from the Fottrell Group – the Task Force on Undergraduate Medical Education. The press release reported the group as recommending:

- The introduction of a new approach to entry to medical education in Ireland, involving a mix of graduate and under-graduate entry streams.
- That selection for entry to undergraduate medicine would be based on two measures. Anyone opting for medicine who achieves 450 Leaving Certificate points will be eligible for consideration, with places to be allocated on the basis of performance on a separate aptitude test.

- The second method of entry will be through graduate entry which would be open to all graduates of honours Bachelors degree programmes, irrespective of academic discipline. The selection method would be based on performance on an appropriate aptitude test, on similar lines to that used for selection of the under-graduate programmes. The group envisages that expanded opportunities for graduate entry will be facilitated by the expected creation of additional medical education places as recommended by the National Task Force on Medical Staffing.
- That a quota of places would be reserved in each medical school for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. These would be allocated on merit on the basis of aptitude test performance to students from such backgrounds.
- That the selection processes for both undergraduate and graduate entry would be independently administered by a national agency such as the CAO.
- That an implementation group be established, to report by March 2005, on all of the logistical, administrative and other implementation details associated with the proposals. It is anticipated that both undergraduate and graduate selection, via the revised measures, could be in place as early as 2006.

Press coverage of the recommendations and the Minister's support for them attracted much media comment particularly relating to the use of aptitude test performance for the allocation of places on merit [C.H.I.U. Review Media Supplement].

7. Quality Assurance

7.1. *EUA review of QA procedures.*

The EUA review second round of visits has been completed in all seven universities. The draft EUA reports will be available at the end of November. It has been agreed with the HEA that Liam Connellan of the IUQB will meet with the HEA Reference Panel at a time to be arranged.

7.2. *IUQB*

7.2.1. *Board Meeting*

The fifth meeting of the Board took place on 26th October 2004 in the C.H.I.U. Boardroom. The Chair noted the resignation of ICTU nominee Sally Anne Kinahan from the Board and expressed appreciation for her valuable contribution. He welcomed the new ICTU nominee Mr Peter Rigney, and the new university nominee Dr Philip Nolan (UCD) to their first meeting. The chair also announced the names of four other new members which included the university nominees Dr John Hughes (NUIM), Professor John Murray (TCD) and Professor Don Barry (UL) and the President of the USI Mr Ben Archibald who were unable to attend.

The OECD report was discussed and the references to the IUQB and a Quality Assurance Authority in Figure 2 and Section 36 and to a common quality assurance mechanism in Recommendation 5 of the in the report were noted. In this context the Board agreed that the IUQB would welcome the opportunity to co-operate with its partners in higher education to further the national quality assurance/quality improvement agenda.

The IUQB draft Strategic Plan was introduced by Jane Williams, Chair of the Strategy Group, and agreement was reached on all the key issues including the steps needed to

establish the independence of the Board. It was emphasised that independence is crucial to the credibility of the Board as a guarantor of quality in the university sector and to ensure accountability to society. Central to independence are –

- (i) the establishment of the IUQB as a legal entity,
- (ii) the restructuring of the membership criteria,
- (iii) appropriate and sustainable funding,
- (iv) adequate staffing of the secretariat. The plan was accepted subject to some amendments and will be finalised in December.

The Board was informed that the CEO will retire on 31st January 2005 and the Chair thanked him for his work on behalf of the Board. It was agreed that a job specification will be prepared and that the post will be advertised as soon as possible.

The most recent draft document on ENQA Membership Regulations was tabled. It is expected that new regulations will be ratified at a special meeting of the Network in Frankfurt on 4th November. The document highlighted again the need for member agencies to be independent of government and universities.

Dr Teresa Lee reported on developments in the five sectoral projects under way and noted that funding had been obtained from the HEA for two new projects entitled ‘Academic Work Loads’ and ‘Institutional Research’.

Professor Jim Browne reported on the meeting with representatives of eight professional bodies held in the C.H.I.U. Boardroom on 2nd September. It was agreed that the meeting had been very successful and that this important initiative should be developed further.

The next meeting of the Board is on 14th-15th February, 2005.

7.2.2. *Sectoral Projects*

Administration of PhD Programmes: The best practice booklet is in the final draft stages. A pre-publication announcement was made by the Minister of Education and Science, Mary Hanafin, at the C.H.I.U. conference on “*Strength and Numbers - attracting and retaining postgraduate researchers in Irish universities*” held on 9th-10th November. Pdraig Walsh, Director of Quality Promotion at DCU, gave a short presentation on the booklet on behalf of the IUQB.

The European Commission Steering Group on Mobility is developing a Researcher's Charter which will set out best practice in a large number of topics including PhD training. The group is very interested in the work of the PhD project in Ireland. In particular The Science Ministry in Flanders is about to carry out a similar exercise on PhD students and visited the IUQB to discuss this project on 5th/6th July 2004. Professor Jim Gosling, Director of Quality at NUIG, accepted an invitation to talk about the IUQB project to the Ministry in Flanders on 23rd September.

As a consequence of the IUQB's work the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education has issued an invitation to the IUQB seeking the participation of Irish Universities in an international survey of PhD students together with Norway, Finland, Austria, Hungary and Spain (Cataluna). This survey is a continuation of a study carried out in Swedish universities.

Student Support Services: The best practice booklet will be published in Spring 2005 following the international conference scheduled for 10th-11th February. This project has assumed an added importance in light of the recent report entitled 'Internationalisation of Irish Education Services' currently with the Minister for Education and Science.

Teaching and Learning in Mathematics: A national conference on the project will be held in Dublin on 11th December to which representatives of the Institutes of Technology, the Irish Mathematics Teachers Association, Business and Industry and other stakeholders will be invited. An international conference will be held in early 2005, and a booklet completed thereafter.

Work is advanced on the projects '*Improving Teaching and Learning*' and '*Strategic Planning in Academic Departments*', with publication of the best practice booklets scheduled for June/July 2005.

Further funding has been obtained from the HEA under the National Development Plan for two new projects entitled '*Academic Workloads*' and '*Institutional Research*'. Initial planning meetings are scheduled for end-November.

7.2.3. Professional Bodies

A subgroup of the IUQB consisting of the CEO, Jim Browne, Liam Connellan, David Redmond and Teresa Lee met with representatives of eight professional bodies (see C.H.I.U. Review, June 2004) in the C.H.I.U. Boardroom on 2nd September. A brief presentation of the IUQB by the CEO describing the quality assurance/quality improvement processes in the Irish universities, and the role of the IUQB, was followed by a presentation from each of the bodies on their work in the area of quality assurance and the recognition of university degrees and courses. The meeting was useful in clarifying areas of common interest, and it was agreed that the initiative should be developed.

7.3. Irish Higher Education Quality Network

A meeting of the IHEQN was held on 7th October 2004 in NQAI. It was agreed that the Qualifications Authority would host a new IHEQN page on its site. In a discussion on the OECD Report the DES representative noted that the Department is considering how it will proceed with implementing the report. It was indicated that the Irish Higher Education Quality Network might inform the discussions regarding the principle of establishing a 'common quality assurance scheme' for the programmes of the universities and institutes of technology (OECD Report, p. 21) and the proposed Quality Assurance Authority (OECD report, p. 45). The importance of developments in the context of the Bologna Process, as well as the recent European Commission statement on Quality Assurance was emphasised.

A study group presented a preliminary report concerning best practice around the world in the publication, or otherwise, of self-evaluation reports in higher education quality processes. It appears from these findings – drawn thus far from a study of practice in the United Kingdom, Denmark, France, Switzerland, Finland, Germany, Spain, and the United States – that there is no requirement anywhere to publish self-evaluation reports in higher education quality assurance processes, whether these are of the evaluation or accreditation varieties. Nor is there much evidence that higher education institutions voluntarily go down

the route of publishing self-evaluations. Ian McKenna, DES, will take over as chairperson from Don McQuillan.

7.4. Consultation /Networking

- The CEO was an invited participant in the Credit Transfer Workshop held in Bangkok on 30th-31st August 2004 and organised in the context of the ASEAN-EU University Network Programme (AUNP).
- The CEO and the Programme Manager attended the EAIR Forum in Barcelona on 6th-8th September 2004.
- The CEO and Professor Jim Gosling visited Oman on 14th-22nd September 2004 at the invitation of the Ministry of Manpower to assess the quality assurance needs of the Colleges of Technology.
- The Programme Manager attended two meetings of the FETAC Standards Forum on 14th September and 20th October 2004.
- The CEO met with Professor Ivan Mencer of Rijeka University (Croatia) who spent 4th-29th October 2004 in UCD to study the Irish model of Quality Assurance.
- The Programme Manager attended the extraordinary meeting of ENQA, at the invitation of the HEA, held on 4th November in Frankfurt.

8. International

8.1. ENQA

A special meeting of the European Quality Assurance Network was held in Frankfurt on 4th November 2004 to consider the issues postponed from the June meeting in Stockholm on 3rd-4th June. The Programme Manager attended at the invitation of the HEA. At the meeting it was agreed to dissolve the network ENQA and to establish it as an association. The association name is 'European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education'. Its acronym shall be ENQA. Of interest to the IUQB were the detailed new regulations for membership of the Network. These were agreed at the meeting pending finalisation of some minor corrections. The criteria for membership will require that the IUQB is established as a legal entity; that it has adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to conduct reviews and that appropriate provision is made for the development of its processes and procedures. It will also have to demonstrate that it is independent to the extent both that it has autonomous responsibility for its operations and that the judgements made in its reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher educational institutes, ministries or other stakeholders. ENQA are also in the process of drafting documentation, in consultation with the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB, that seeks to develop standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area and to make recommendations for an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditations agencies or bodies. They will report back with the recommendations to the Bologna Follow-up Group to Ministers in 2005.

8.2. Bologna Process

The Bologna Process is at a critical stage half-way to 2010. According to EUA, major legislative changes are being introduced and implementation is underway everywhere. Thus, it is only now that many of the real challenges for universities and higher education systems are becoming apparent.

The EU Commission has its own 'Berlin to Bergen' priorities; the Bologna Follow-up Group [BFUG] has decided to focus efforts, in addition to national implementation, on three European priorities: QA, the elaboration of a European Qualifications Framework and the stocktaking exercise (which in turn covers progress regarding the implementation of the two-cycle structure, recognition and QA).

Over the last few months, to promote the interests of the universities, EUA has identified areas of agreement and also areas of difference both in relation to the position of the European Commission and the attitudes of national governmental representatives in the BFUG.

The BFUG considered a discussion document on issues for the Bergen Communiqué and a programme outline for the Bergen Conference at a meeting on 12th/13th October, 2004. EUA wrote to BFUG expressing concerns over the state of discussions at the Group.

Based on recent discussions with the Commission and BFUG developments, EUA has identified a number of priority issues for action in relation to (a) the preparation of Bergen, and (b) the role of universities in the future development of the Bologna Process.

- (a) For Bergen:
1. Quality Assurance inside institutions and at European level (QA),
 2. The role of institutions in the development of an overarching European Qualifications Framework (EQF),
 3. European dimension (including the Bologna Promoters),
 4. Definition of next steps in relation to the 'new' Bologna Action Line linking EHEA and ERA (through doctoral programmes).
- (b) Post-Bergen:
1. Identifying 'implementation priorities' for the post-2005 phase and defining role of institutions,
 2. Maintaining the context, i.e. the unique space the Bologna Process provides for common discussion between governments, universities and students,
 3. Following up QA and the EQF as long-term priorities for institutions,
 4. Further developing/defining the European (and the international) dimension).

The EUA discussed proposed EUA actions on the priority issues at its Council meeting on 28th October, 2004.

8.3. *Bologna Promoters*

A team of Irish educational experts has been appointed by the Department of Education and Science to act as National Promoters of the Bologna Declaration. The Bologna Promoters will be responsible for the dissemination of the relevance of the Bologna Declaration to Irish higher education institutions and Irish policy developments. The initiative is being funded under the EU's Socrates Programme. The Promoters include -

- Dr. Pdraig Walsh, Director of Quality Promotion, Dublin City University
- Mr. Danny Brennan, Registrar, Letterkenny Institute of Technology
- Dr. Thomas Duff, Registrar, Dublin Institute of Technology
- Ms Brigid Breathnach, Outgoing Education Officer, Union of Students in Ireland

Their role has subsumed that of the National Counsellors for ECTS/DS.

8.4. *Trends IV*

EUA are undertaking a Trends IV project to develop an accurate picture of developments in European HEI's as they face the challenges of implementing the Bologna Process. As part of the project, institutional site visits are being conducted in all European countries. NUIG has been selected for a site visit and is co-operating with the EUA.

9. National Framework of Qualifications

9.1. *NQAI Consultation Document*

Since the introduction of the National Framework of Qualifications in October, 2004 the NQAI has engaged in consultation on the development of policies for the inclusion of professional and international awards in the Framework. As a result of this consultation and subsequent workshops, the Authority has published a further consultation paper setting out draft policies and criteria for the inclusion of a range of awards in the Framework. NQAI has invited submissions to be made by 19th January, 2005. There is a provision on the Authority's website [www.nqai.ie] to download a response form to this paper. The intention is that all of the submissions made to the Authority will be publicly available on the website. Following the receipt of submissions, the Authority is planning to host a workshop on the issues to which university representatives will be invited.

9.2. *Universities and the National Framework of Qualifications*

A draft paper on universities and the National Framework of Qualifications has been prepared by Dr. Caroline Hussey, C.H.I.U. Representative on the NQAI, which is being considered by the Registrars' Group. The intention is that the paper be published as a C.H.I.U. booklet for distribution, principally in the university community.

9.3. *Classification of Degrees*

The issue of the appropriateness and continued relevance of the existing system of degree classifications in universities is likely to attract increasing attention. In this regard, a Universities UK report on the need to review the degree classification system in the UK was released on 4th November, 2004. A Steering Group has been established to take forward the report recommendations including –

- consider the degree classification system to ensure more effective and appropriate ways of representing student learning and achievement,
- develop a common higher education credit system for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

10. Copyright

The C.H.I.U. Working Group on Copyright met on 20th October, 2004. The Working Group has agreed that the C.H.I.U. view should be along the following lines –

- it is disappointed that the provision for digital copying has not materialised as intended in the agreement of last January,
- it recognises that this is not altogether the fault of ICLA,

- for this reason, it is not able to recommend adoption of the licence on the basis of the previously agreed fees until there is better provision for digital copying,
- it does recommend adoption of the licence on the basis of €3.00 per fte student for the current year on the clear understanding that ICLA will have improved the provision for digital copying by June 2005. If satisfactory provision has been made at that stage, it will then recommend adoption of the licence on the originally agreed terms.

It also wants some further clarification on the text of the licence and agrees that ICLA should be pressed for the licence to be amended in line with the solicitor's advice when clarified.

A paper outlining the matters on which the Working Group is seeking legal advice was prepared. There are three parts to the paper. Part A consists of the Working Group's comments on the proposed amendments to the Licence. Part B consists of the responses of ICLA (with comments from the Group Chair) to the issues which were raised earlier this year by the C.H.I.U. Secretaries' Group. As these responses also have a bearing on the Licence they have been referred to the C.H.I.U. Solicitor. Part C lists three separate matters on which legal advice is required.

11. Plagiarism

The Registrars' Group are considering a proposal for provision of a plagiarism prevention service on a sectoral basis.

12. C.H.I.U. Developments

12.1. Changes

C.H.I.U. Council has decided to appoint an independent Chair of the Council and to make consequential and other changes to the C.H.I.U. structure and constitution.

12.2. C.H.I.U. Assistant Director Finance/Administration

Ms. Kathryn Tracey will resign from her position with effect from 31st December, 2004 and is currently on maternity leave. The position was advertised in the media and interviews were held on 4th November, 2004. It is expected that an appointment will be made to take effect in early January, 2005.

12.3. Librarians' Group

As detailed in para.2.8.4. above, the C.H.I.U. Librarians' Group negotiated a scheme which will provide access for researchers in Irish universities to the contents of a wide range of electronic journals via their library websites. The national initiative, IReL, which is jointly funded by SFI and the HEA, was announced on 29th October, 2004.

12.4. Student Services Directors' Group

One of the proposals arising from an IUQB sectoral project on student services is for the formation of a Student Services Directors' Group under the auspices of C.H.I.U. The Group has been meeting informally on an ad hoc basis as part of the project and members strongly favour formalising objects, meetings and working arrangements on a permanent basis under C.H.I.U.

12.5. Registrars' Group

Due to the full-time involvement of Prof. D. McQuillan in work of the IUQB, it has not been possible for him to provide the support required by the Registrars' Group. In the light of IUQB strategic plan development proposals, the increasing pressure for representation of Registrars on national and international agencies and the need to address academic issues at a sectoral level in order to anticipate or respond to external pressures and drivers, the Registrars' Group are considering how their support requirements might best be met.

12.6. Human Resource Officers Group

This Group has prepared proposals for appointment of an officer within C.H.I.U. to deal with the growing sectoral agenda of human resources/industrial relations issues. CODIT already have such a person in place which greatly assisted the management of IoTs in dealing effectively with submissions to, and engagement with, the Benchmarking Body.

12.7. Deans of Engineering

The Chair of the Council of Irish University Deans of Engineering has requested, on behalf of the Deans of Engineering of the seven universities, that their group be constituted formally as a subcommittee of C.H.I.U.

13. HEAnet

Representatives of UCFOG and the C.H.I.U. Computing Centre Director met to discuss the HEA proposals for the restructuring of HEAnet. They also met with Mr. John Hayden, acting for the HEA. On foot of discussions at the meetings, a letter outlining C.H.I.U. views was sent to the HEA on 27th September, 2004. HEA is anxious to examine how a number of changes might be made to the membership of the Board in the short-term without amendments to HEAnet constitution. An informal meeting with C.H.I.U. representatives is due to take place on 15th November, 2004.

14. C.H.I.U. Universities Act 1997 Archive

The C.H.I.U. Universities Act 1997 Archive was launched at a function hosted by Dr. Seamus Smyth in NUIM in June 2004. It was attended by Cllr. Niamh Bhreathnach and a number of ex-university Presidents, and DES and HEA officers who were involved with the preparation of the legislation. Copies of the Archive in four volumes and in digital format on CD have been sent to the universities for their records. Dr. Smyth paid tribute to Mr. Tom Gillen who had compiled the archive. Support for the project was provided by The Atlantic Philanthropies.

15. AVCC Invitation

The planned C.H.I.U. visit to AVCC and Australian universities for August/September 2004 fell through. The AVCC had arranged a challenging programme for the visit but it was decided not to proceed with the visit when the number of University Heads available to travel was reduced to three. AVCC is anxious to know whether C.H.I.U. will take up the invitation in 2005.