

IUA Review [08/2] for IUA Meetings in DCU on 14th April, 2008.

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1. Research

1.1. National Research Policy

Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation 2006-2013

The SSTI is overseen by two key groups, the Higher Education and Research Group (HERG) and Technology Ireland. The IUA is represented by N. Costello / C. O'Carroll on HERG along with delegates from the key funding agencies and government departments, and the Group is chaired by the Department of Education and Science. At the last meeting of the HERG on 8th March 2008, the IUA made a presentation on Graduate Education (SIF 4th Level Network project) by the Chair of the Deans of Postgraduate Studies, Prof. Michael Ryan (UCD) and the IUA Network Coordinator, Dr. Westley Forsythe. In these presentations the IUA stressed that the universities can only deliver high quality PhD graduates at the levels set by SSTI if, and only if:

- i. Agencies provide four years of funding for PhD students
- ii. Provision is made for the support of generic/transferable skills and international mobility
- iii. Non-EU PhD students are treated as EU students.

There are currently three active working groups, namely -

- ***Capacity Development***

The group met on 26th February focusing on Graduate Education and the IUA proposal for Co-ordinated Research Audit.

1. ***Graduate Education***

There was a presentation from HEA and from the Institutes of Technology on their plans for graduate education. They have a SIF funded project Research Alliance that is similar to the IUA 4th Level Network. The IUA is on the steering group of the Research Alliance.

2. ***Co-ordinated Research Audit***

This proposal was made to the Working Group by the IUA at the meeting on 11th January, 2008. Although it received a positive response at that meeting only SFI have provided a written response and it appears that they have not properly understood the proposal. Other agencies have committed to report back at the next meeting. The IUA will ensure that there are representatives of the Finance Officers present to discuss.

- **High Level Indicators**

As reported in the January IUA Review, a technical sub-group was established to progress the development of an indicators framework for SSTI actions.

- **Research Careers**

A joint meeting took place on 1st April 2008 between four IUA groups (VPDOR, UCFOG, Registrars and HR officers) to discuss the issue of research careers. The meeting agreed on the need for a shared early stage research career structure for the sector (covering the first post-doc phase), and discussed a number of possibilities for such a common structure, focusing on the need to support early stage researchers, to encourage mobility, and to facilitate the transition between post doctoral work and further employment.

A working group comprised of representatives of VPDOR, Registrars and HR officers will continue this work, in consultation with UCFOG.

1.2. Science Foundation Ireland

Meeting with SFI Director General, Frank Gannon

The VP/Deans of Research will meet with the DG Frank Gannon and senior SFI staff on 14th April. From the IUA perspective the main issue to be discussed is that of research overheads. Currently SFI is paying 30% on modified total direct costs of research. When the AOIP/OIP was in place universities could recover up to 40% of indirect costs which is still below the full costs of research. The IUA has written to Prof. Gannon with a view to return to the 40% rate.

1.3. Fourth Level Ireland Network Group

This group is funded through the Strategic Innovation Fund in 2006 and is responsible for the development of 4th Level Ireland across the universities. The members are the Deans of Postgraduate Studies, the appointed network administrators in each university and it is chaired by Prof. Michael Ryan (UCD) for 2008. In the IUA Dr. Conor O'Carroll has oversight of this project and it is run by Dr. Westley Forsythe.

1.3.1. Activities 28 January 2008 to 14 April 2008

- Fourth Level Network liaison with IUQB on 'PhD Quality assurance' SIF 1 project.
- Appointment of Dr Patricia Morgan as Dean of Graduate Studies at NUI Galway.
- Final iterations of Irish universities' graduate student skills statement and preparations for launch to the sector and promotion of its purpose and use.
- On 5th February IBEC hosted a well attended and oversubscribed IUA-IBEC-IOTI event exploring the practicalities of PhD student placement with non-academic employers. Consideration is being given to the convening of a small working group of supervisors and others to explore the development of a pilot scheme(s) to facilitate

student-non-academic employer interaction, possibly including bi-lateral supervisor-non-academic employer placements.

- The Fourth Level Network availed of an invitation to present to the Higher Education Research Group on the challenges of fourth level education in Irish universities as they relate to achieving SSTI PhD numbers and the creation of a ‘Knowledge Society’.
- Production of a draft university position paper on the challenges and needs of fourth level education development. The Network in collaborating with the IUA VPs Research group in this task.
- Initial planning has begun on a Graduate Education Forum late in 2008, potentially involving the HEA and incorporating an announcement of the outcomes of a planned HEA review of Graduate Education.
- The Network contracted ISA Media to produce the current Fourth Level Ireland brochure electronically in English, Spanish and Chinese. The e-brochure is available from www.i-studentadvisor.com/iua and will substantially improve universities’ ability to promote collaboratively graduate education opportunities while decreasing costs.
- The Network continues to liaise with the SIF 1 funded Irish Universities Study on the postgraduate research student element of the survey.
- The IUA has been active in engaging with external stakeholders on 4th Level Ireland and there have been meetings/presentations by Dr. O’Carroll to the Royal Irish Academy, RDS Science Committee, UCD Humanities Institute, University Librarians and a European Commission CREST Expert Group on Competence Centres.

1.3.2. Activities for Next Period

- Launch and promotion of the Irish universities’ graduate student skills statement.
- The launch of a Fourth Level Ireland website at www.4thlevelireland.ie, which will provide resources and information to students, supervisors and employers on 4th Level education. It will also complement the e-brochure as a means of promoting 4th Level education opportunities at Irish universities to overseas students.
- Agreement on and submission to the HERG working group on Research Capacity of a university position paper on the challenges and needs of 4th Level Education in Irish universities.
- Participation in the work and events of the recently convened European Universities Association Council for Doctoral Education. The inaugural council conference takes place in June 2008.
- Follow up actions in partnership with IBEC and IOTI on the interaction of PhD students with non-academic employers.
- Exploration of potential collaboration with Queen’s University Belfast on the provision of skills development opportunities for PhD students.
- The Fourth Level Network will meet at least twice in the next reporting period to consider and action progress on the above tasks and goals.

- Communication and promotion of the Network's work at events including NUI Galway's Deans and Heads conference in April; UCC's New Voices conference, which will include a forum on the changing nature of doctoral education and participation in Grad Careers Ireland's bi-annual careers service conference in June 2008.

1.4. EU Seventh Framework Programme

1.4.1. IUA Marie Curie Office

While the main remit of the Marie Curie Office is to provide practical guidance and assistance to applicants and contractors in the area of the Marie Curie Actions and the Research Potential Programme, the Marie Curie National Contact Point (NCP) is also regularly invited to make contributions to events and working groups concerned with broader issues related to mobility and researcher careers. In February, the NCP contributed to an expert meeting organised by the European Commission's DG Education and Culture on the new "Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctoral Programmes" project. At the end of March she followed an invitation by the co-ordinator of the Marie Curie Early Stage network "RIVAGE" to chair a round table on "Career prospects, recruitment and life-long training strategies" at a Research School organised by INRA near Paris. As a member of the eument-net Advisory Board, she will also attend the upcoming conference "The Future of Mentoring Programmes – Linking Programmes, Experience and People in Europe" in Bern, which takes place within the framework of the FP6 "Science in Society" Coordination Action "eument-net – Building a European Network of Academic Mentoring Programmes for Women Scientists".

1.4.2. 'People' (Marie Curie) Programme

The first wave of Marie Curie deadlines for 2008 has just passed, covering in particular the two new programmes "Co-funding of Regional, National and International Programmes (COFUND)" which is directed at funding bodies running fellowship schemes involving mobility, and the "International Research Staff Exchange Scheme (IRSES)" which provides support for exchanges of staff between research organizations in Europe and overseas. Another important deadline was the one for the "Industry-Academia Partnerships and Pathways (IAPP)" scheme which aims at increasing and facilitating transnational exchanges between non-commercial research organisations and industry. Finally, the first cut-off dates for the European and the International Reintegration Grants are also just over.

In order to support (potential) applicants for these schemes, the IUA Marie Curie Office organised a number of events:

- Following up on a first information and awareness raising event in November, the office organised a targeted proposal writing workshop for potential applicants to the COFUND scheme at the end of January. The meeting was very well attended, with eight potential applicants represented at the meeting. Three proposals by Irish funding organisations were finally submitted for the first deadline, with a number

of other organisations strongly considering an application at the next deadline in early 2009.

- In order to provide tailor made information on the IAPP and the IRSES scheme, the National Contact Point gave a number of seminars on these schemes in various locations. In close collaboration with the Research Officers and other support units such as Industry Liaison Offices, targeted sessions took place at UL, NUIG, UCC, TCD, DCU, NUIM, WIT as well as NovaUCD. These meetings were in general well attended both by academics and by representatives from local enterprises for which the IAPPs constitute a very useful and relatively simple way of obtaining EU funding.
- The National Contact Point also gave an invited presentation on various Marie Curie Actions at the “DIT European Research School” in February.

The next deadlines in the Marie Curie programme will be the one for the Initial Training Networks (ITN) on 2nd September and those for the three types of Individual Fellowships (IEF, IOF, IIF) on 19th August. The ITN deadline will be of particular importance as no deadline is foreseen for 2009, while the budget for 2008 will be significantly higher than the one for 2007. As for previous major deadlines, it is planned to arrange again a number of visits to the universities (provided that there is sufficient interest) as well as a number of other institutions.

In collaboration with the ERC National Contact Point at SFI the Marie Curie Office is also organising a “Marie Curie & ERC National Information Day” on 15th May, which will take place at the TCD Science Gallery. This event will cover the ITN and the Individual Fellowship schemes, and also include a special session on the Starting Grants of the European Research Council.

The IUA Marie Curie Office not only provides information to applicants regarding the eligibility criteria and technical aspects of the proposal submission, but also carries out pre-submission proposal checks, giving feedback on draft proposals. A growing number of applicants are now taking up this offer and ask for a critical reading of their draft proposal. However, in order to be able to respond to this increasing demand, it is essential that proposals be submitted to the Marie Curie NCP early enough before the deadline; a fact that not all applicants take into account.

At the level of interaction with the European Commission through the ‘People’ Programme Committee, the IUA Marie Curie Office has continued to be very actively involved in a number of important discussions. These included the proposed Commission initiatives to simplify the rules in the ‘People’ (Marie Curie) Work Programme 2009 and beyond. In order to be able to provide proper feedback to the Commission on the proposed initiatives, the Research Officers at the universities as well as a number of current and former Marie Curie contractors were consulted by email on a number of key issues.

1.4.3. 'Research Potential' Programme

Due to the focus on “Convergence Regions” and “Outermost Regions of the EU” Ireland is not in a position to participate in most of the calls in the Research Potential programme. However, two projects with Irish coordinators were successful in a special call in 2007 addressed to consortia involving at least one partner from a ‘Western Balkan Country’, which was also open to partners from other Member States or Associated Countries. One of these two projects, “ProSense” (led by Ericsson Ireland) had its launch meeting at UCD in March. The NCP was invited to this meeting and gave a presentation on future directions of the Research Potential Programme as well as synergies with and possible follow-up activities in the Marie Curie programme.

1.4.4. European Network of National Contact Points for the 'People' (Marie Curie) Programme (“Mobility NCPs”)

The European Network of ‘People’ NCPs (“PeopleNetwork”) in which IUA participates as Work Package leader is still in the negotiation phase with the start date for the project now postponed to 1st May. IUA has now taken over an additional task that was originally allocated to another contractor that left the consortium, bringing IUA’s share in the project up to about 17 person-months.

1.4.5. FP7 National Support Structure

As a member of the FP7 National Support Network the IUA Marie Curie Office is actively participating in and contributing to the network. In particular, IUA will host the next network meeting on 24th April at the IUA.

1.5. Irish Researcher Mobility Office and Web Portal

1.5.1. Funding

The DETE allocation in 2008 for managing the researcher mobility office is €90,000. This shows an increase of €50,000 in 2007 funding. The increased allocation is to take account of the expiry of EU funding support in 2007 and the additional work involved in developing the Mobility Portal and administration of the Hosting Agreement scheme.

1.5.2. Implementation of the Third Country Directive

The IUA Mobility Office is playing a key role in the official accreditation and immigration process of the hosting agreement scheme and to date have submitted 134 approved agreements to immigration. There have been some delays in communication of the scheme within the embassies and consulates but this is being improved with the assistance of the department of Justice.

An extranet is in development with external contractors to enable key departments such as Immigration authorities, embassies and consulates access to an electronic database of all holders of hosting agreements. This will be funded by the Office of Science and Technology in DETE and Department of Justice.

1.6. *Expertiseireland.com*

Funding was secured for the proposal for the definition phase of a new National Research Platform which was submitted as part of IUA's overall SIF Cycle II Universities sectoral proposal. The scoping phase is scheduled to run for one year, the intention being that the execution of the resultant scoping and definition plan would be submitted to the Interdepartmental Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation for funding from overall SSTI resources. The academic output captured by the *expertiseireland.com* portal is proposed to be used as a building block for this new Platform. As a result the *expertiseireland.com* portal will continue to exist but without further development.

Currently, the number of expert profiles being contributed by the Institutions to the *expertiseireland.com* portal stands at 5,609 as of 1st April, 2008. The breakdown is as follows:

Trinity College Dublin	971
Dublin Institute of Technology	686
University College Dublin	658
University of Ulster	613
Dublin City University	546
National University of Ireland, Galway	519
University College Cork	508
Queen's University Belfast	412
University of Limerick	331
National University of Ireland, Maynooth	287
Athlone Institute of Technology	28
Waterford Institute of Technology	20
Letterkenny Institute of Technology	15
Institute of Technology, Tallaght	8
Dundalk Institute of Technology	7

Testing has been completed with Trinity College Dublin, who developed a link from the Institutional Repository to the local Research Support System, which will allow access to full text publications to be published on *expertiseireland.com*. Currently TCD are performing a quality review of the information prior to publication.

2. Strategic Innovation Fund

Information on SIF projects can be found in the following sections of the IUA Review :

Fourth Level Ireland – Sections 2.3, 8.1. and 8.4.

Full Economic Costing System – Section 4.3

Strategic Planning and Decision Support – Section 4.4.

Access: Widening Participation – Section 6

3. Funding

3.1. Recurrent Funding

3.1.1 Current and Capital Funding

At the request of IUA Council UCFOG are currently drafting a funding/financing proposal for the sector. The paper will address the following matters:-

- the historical under funding position,
- the extent of budgeted deficits for 2007/08 and
- examples of reductions in and risks to service quality arising from funding cuts.

The paper will also consider proposals addressing the funding shortfalls including potential new income/revenue sources. A working draft of the proposal will be considered by Council at its meeting on 14th April 2008.

3.1.2. Tuition Fee Increase Submission 2008/09

We await a response to the sector's submission in respect of the required increase in tuition fees for 2008/09.

3.1.3. Recurrent Grant Allocation Model

Representatives from the Registrar's group and UCFOG met on 1st April 2008 to consider issues relating to the RGAM. It was noted that the current allocation model and fixed pot of funding was incompatible with the HEA's objective of increasing participation rates. In addition institutions could not plan strategically in the context of a fixed pot of funding without knowing the position of other institutions. It was agreed that senior management in universities would need to give consideration to addressing these issues by agreeing to share enrolment projections and considering the impact this was having on the standard resource.

It was noted that there remained a number of areas in respect of student numbers which required clarification and it was proposed that a more robust audit of student numbers and other areas of the model was required.

It was proposed that institutions would liaise with senior management and report back to the groups at their meetings on 14th April 2008.

3.2. Pension Issues

We understand that the pensions proposal has now been approved and signed-off by the Minister for Finance and it is hoped that the proposal would be approved by Government within the coming weeks.

There remain a number of operational issues to be addressed and meetings of the various IUA pension working groups are currently being organised.

3.3. Full Economic Cost System

Phase I of the FEC project is now drawing to a close and the consultants are finalising a tailored implementation plan for each institution. Funding for implementation of the FEC system has been approved under SIF cycle II. Institutional FEC project steering groups and FEC project managers are currently being put in place. The IUA has also advertised for the central project manager position.

3.4. Strategic Planning & Decision Support SIF Project

The consultation process in respect of this project has continued and is drawing towards a conclusion. A draft list of potential indicators based on both international practice and consultations has been developed. The consultants are currently finalising a proposed methodology for prioritising indicators and arriving at the 'headline' set for the sector and are finalising a draft KPI Development Framework. These will be considered by the project steering group at the next meeting, which is scheduled for May.

4. HEA/Department of Education & Science

4.1. Access

- *Access – Widening Participation*

An update on progress under the SIF 1 sectoral project on widening participation is included in Section 6 (Equity of Access project).

- *HEA National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2010.*

A pre-consultation draft of this new plan was circulated to HEA Authority members for their meeting of 1st April 08, and to the IUA and other stakeholders. This comprehensive draft plan re-examines the rationale, policy and context for access, and documents progress made in this field over the last 10 years. It looks in detail at current challenges and emerging issues, then proposes a set of objectives and supporting actions to address these challenges. The final section puts forwards a series of targets, particularly in the field of overall participation rates (72% by 2020); minimum entry rates for all socio-economic groups (54% by 2020); mature students as a percentage of full-time entrants (20% by 2013); mature students as a percentage of all full-time and part-time entrants (27% by 2013); flexible/part-time provision

(17% by 2013); Ireland in the top quartile of EU countries for lifelong learning by 2013; numbers of students with sensory, physical and multiple disabilities in HE (doubled by 2013). The full draft will be circulated once permission has been obtained.

- *Higher Education “Access/Foundation” Courses*
In order to help clarify diverse positions regarding the provision of access/foundation courses in the universities and Institutes of Technology, and the role of the further education sector, agreement has been reached between IUA, IoTI, DIT, HEA and DES to undertake a study looking at current provision in this area and possible future options, in order to encourage maximum potential of access, transfer and progression across the National Framework of Qualifications. The study will also examine good practice in other education systems (notably Scotland).

Terms of Reference have been agreed, an academic expert has been appointed, and the study will take place during the period March– June 08. Costs will be shared between HEA, the universities and DIT.

4.2. Internationalisation/Work Permits

A letter and proposal have been received from DETE regarding an employment permit scheme for non-EEA students.

This proposal, which is understood to be written on the basis of considerable pressure from several unions within the Towards 2016 Framework, contains a number of features:

- it moves considerable onus from the employer to the student in terms of ensuring correct paperwork;
- it does not differentiate between students of any type (graduate, undergraduate, university, language school, etc);
- it creates what appears to be a new bureaucratic maze in terms of ensuring rapid delivery of permits and a high standard of service, with a heavy burden on both GNIB and DETE.

The positive elements are that no labour market needs tests will be applied, and that students doing an internship as an integral part of a university academic course will not be obliged to apply for a work permit. These are points which IUA had argued for on a number of occasions with DETE.

The deadline for submissions is 9th April 2008. IUA has sought feedback from each university and is in consultation with other stakeholders in this area prior to making a submission.

4.3. Framework for Departures from Approved Levels of Remuneration

IUA has been in contact with the HEA in relation to the proposed review of the above framework which is ongoing.

4.4. Framework for the Payment by Corporations of Remuneration to University Employees

IUA has been in contact with the HEA in relation to the development of a framework for the payment by corporations of remuneration to university employees and has made proposals to the HEA in this regard. The HEA has raised a number of concerns and has sought information in relation to current arrangements.

4.5. Code of Governance

At the joint meeting of the Secretaries group and UCFOG on 28th January 2008 it was agreed that the format and principles to be included in the Statement of Internal Control would be the same for all institutions and that the actual wording of the Statement would be shared but may not be consistent as this would have to reflect individual institutions circumstances. It was also agreed that the GA Chair would not jointly sign-off on the statement of internal control but would sign the statement confirming that it had been presented to GA for consideration.

5. Equity of Access Project

5.1. Access-Admissions Policies on Non-standard Entry

An information-sharing workshop, involving Admissions, Access and Disability Officers of the seven Universities and DIT, was convened by IUA to facilitate exchange of practice and more detailed discussion on the various approaches to access-admissions policy/procedures. The outputs from the meeting were as follows:

- i. It was agreed that institutions would work with IUA towards the publication of a document summarising Access-Admission Policies & Procedures by 1st June 2008
- ii. In the first instance an updated version of the current ‘collated’ document will be tabled at the next meeting of the IUA Registrars’ Group on Monday 14th April ’08 and approval will sought to progress to publication
- iii. Individual institutions will review and revise (as appropriate) their existing policies & procedures, and documentation pertaining to same
- iv. IUA will convene a meeting of Access, Admissions & Disability Officers again in the autumn.

5.2. *Discussions with CAO*

A group led by the IUA, met with the CAO Operations and Service Managers in February 08. The IUA group consisted of the chairpersons of the Disability Officers Network and the HEAR Operations Group and a nominated representative from the Admissions Officers Association, along with L. Purser and A. Galvin. Points worthy of particular note include:

- 2008 Application Cycle - CAO will supply specific data to participating HEIs on applicants seeking consideration on the grounds of a disability and those making a HEAR application. This data will be downloaded by a nominated host-institution who will take responsibility for the secure management of this data and will act as sole point of contact with the CAO.
- 2009 Application Cycle - Subject to agreement by the CAO Operations Group and Board of Directors, an on-line supplementary information form for applicants with a disability will be introduced. This will significantly enhance the quality of data available on such applicants to higher education and will support more efficient processing of these applications.
- 2009 Application Cycle - Subject to agreement by the CAO Operations Group and Board of Directors, applicants wishing to be considered for the HEAR scheme will be able to indicate this option on the CAO form.
- 2010 Application Cycle - Subject to agreement by the CAO Operations Group and Board of Directors, the CAO executive will progress plans to collect background information on all applicants (for the purpose of HEA returns). Completion of these questions will not be made mandatory, however CAO will endeavour to present them in a manner that facilitates applicant participation. The collection of this data from all applicants supports ongoing efforts to mainstream supplementary admissions routes for access target groups.
- Data Protection – CAO raised a number of important data protection issues for the partner institutions working collaboratively on supplementary admission routes and for IUA in its role as project coordinator.

5.3. *Meeting on Collaboration on Approaches to Provision of Support to Students with Disabilities across Different Level of Education*

Through liaison with a Principal Officer in DES, IUA secured a first meeting of key partners on support for students with disabilities through different levels of education, with particular reference to progression onto higher education. Representatives attended from:

- Department of Education and Science:
 - Higher Education –Equity of Access
 - Special Education Section
 - NEPS

- National Access Office, HEA
- IUA
- DAWN (Disability Officers Network)
- National Council for Special Education
- State Examinations Commission

IUA/DAWN made a presentation to the meeting on access to higher education for students with a disability with particular reference to the supplementary admissions route. This set the context for the wide-ranging discussion that ensued. It is proposed to agree a programme of work on key issues of mutual concern, which will be progressed by a smaller representative group (of the above).

5.4. *Progress the Disability Element of Access Project*

Although some progress has been made on the disability element of the project, the IUA executive is concerned that its working relationship with Disability Officers is not operating to optimal effect. Specifically, effective lines of communication need to be established and a joint programme of work needs to be agreed. Unless these issues can be resolved over the coming months it is unlikely that we will successfully deliver on the objectives of the project. IUA has raised this matter with the Disability Officers Group for their consideration.

6. National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

6.1. IUA / NQAI Framework Implementation Network

The second meeting of the joint IUA / NQAI Framework Implementation Network took place on 21st January 2008, chaired by Prof. John Scattergood of TCD.

This network, which includes an academic and an administrative representative from each university, as well as a representative from each of the colleges of education affiliated to a particular university and the NUI constituent colleges. The network has established three working groups, as follows:

- Working Group 1 - The importance of consistent award/programme titling and the basis for determination of award/programme Framework levels and links to quality assurance:
- Working Group 2 - Addressing assessment of learning outcomes: including academic and administrative dimensions:
- Working Group 3 - Designing and supporting the design of discipline-specific learning outcomes:

These working groups each met during the period February-March 2008 to discuss objectives in each area and begin deliberations. The next meeting of the Framework Implementation Network will take place on 21st April 2008.

6.2. OECD project on the Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning

As one of over 20 countries participating in the OECD activity on the Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning, Ireland opted to undertake a Thematic Review and engage in Collaborative Policy Analysis (CPA) with regard to the Irish recognition system. A Country Background Report on this theme was published in July 2007 and can be downloaded from the NQF www.nqf.ie and NQAI websites www.nqai.ie. An OECD team visited Ireland during from 4-8th February 2008 to explore these issues in further depth, meeting with representatives from the universities, IoTs, national agencies, etc. to discuss issues surrounding the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The draft OECD report is expected in late April 2008.

6.3. Study of the Implementation and impact of the National Framework of Qualifications

The NQAI has embarked on a study on the implementation and impact of the NFQ. The study will assess the extent to which the National Framework of Qualifications is being implemented; support deeper implementation of the Framework and policies on access, transfer and progression; identify progress in implementation; identify gaps and drivers/obstacles in respect of implementation; assess the initial impact of the Framework. The study will focus primarily on the work of the Authority, awarding bodies and providers of education and training. The study is led by a Study Team chaired by Tom Collins of NUI Maynooth, and including representatives from Scotland (David Raffe, University of Edinburgh) and New Zealand (Frances Kelly, NZ Ministry of Education), as well as a retired assistant director of FÁS (Henry Murdoch).

The study will comprise papers on the state of development of the Framework, policies on access, transfer and progression, and assessment of impact by the Authority; reports from key stakeholder bodies responsible for implementing the Framework in the schooling, HETAC, FETAC and university sectors; case studies of implementation; submissions from the public; evaluation of inputs by a study team of national and international experts; and a synthesis report and recommendations by study team. As part of this, IUA will coordinate a report from the university sector, an outline proposal for which will be tabled for IUA Registrars on 14th April 2008. This paper will report on activity so far within the university sector, and will include findings from a series of interviews with players within a sample of universities and link colleges. The draft reports will be completed by July 2008, and the overall study will finish in early 2009.

7. Communications / Events

7.1. Marketing the University Sector and IUA Services

7.1.1. 4th Level Ireland Website Development

Content for the new website of 4th Level Ireland has been uploaded and a beta (working) site created. This site is in its infancy and many weeks of work are still required to bring it up to a desirable level at which to launch the website. The beta site can be viewed on <http://www.designhouse.ie/4th-level/index.html>.

7.1.2. Communications Group Meeting

The third meeting of the IUA Communications Group will take place in Dublin on 16th April. This meeting will provide a follow up on items discussed in January such as university funding. Part of the meeting will be held in the HEA where senior HEA Managers will make presentations to University Communications Officers. The meeting will also be a first for NUI Galway's newly appointed Communications Manager.

7.1.3 Recruitment Advert for IUA Financial Positions

The IUA produced a recruitment ad for two new financial positions, FEC Project Manager and Financial/Management Accountant. The ad was placed in the Irish Times business section on 4th April with a deadline for applications on 15th April.

7.2. International Affairs

7.2.1. Production of Marketing Materials

Light weight banners for joint marketing purposes at international fairs were produced at the request of the international officers. The officers held four booths at the recent Europosgrados fair in Mexico and reports have come back from Education Ireland staff that the university stand looked very impressive. The hard copy 4th Level Ireland brochure, made slimmer to be more cost effective was widely distributed at the fairs in both Mexico and Brazil.

7.2.2. Mexican Advert for Irish Universities

As part of the marketing activities for the upcoming Europosgrados Fair the IUA produced a sectoral advert for the official event publication.

7.3. Events

7.3.1. Launch of Irish Universities Study and Ron Ehrenberg Lecture

On Tuesday April 15th 2008, 11am-1pm at Royal College of Physicians, No 6 Kildare St, Dublin 2 we will hold a joint IUA/Geary Institute event: "Higher Education Research: National and International Perspectives"

This event will mark the launch of the Irish Universities Study (IUS). This is a three year longitudinal study of the 3rd and 4th level populations of the seven universities. The sector-wide survey is a major innovation providing the universities with the ability to formulate policy for students and researchers based on sound evidence. The IUS is being carried out

on behalf of the IUA by the UCD Geary Institute sponsored by the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF)

Dr Hugh Brady, President of UCD and current President of the Irish Universities Association will launch the IUS and Professor Colm Harmon, Director of the UCD Geary Institute will present preliminary results.

The keynote speaker will be Professor Ronald G. Ehrenberg, Director of the Cornell Higher Education Research Institute. From 1995 to 1998 he served as Cornell's Vice President for Academic Programs, Planning and Budgeting. He has authored or co-authored over 120 papers and 20 books and is a leading figure in the fields of labour economics and education policy. Prof Ehrenberg will discuss international best practice in the evaluation of higher education policy and will outline future directions in this area.

A full programme is available on the events page of the IUA website.

(<http://www.iaa.ie/media-and-events/events-conferences/events/2007/ehrenbergIrishUniversitiesStudy.html>)

7.3.2. *Demonstration of IUA University Library Institutional Repositories*

A demonstration of institutional repositories - the first results of IReL Open Access to Research Project – will be held on 18th May from 11-1pm in the Seminar Room of the National Library on Kildare Street, Dublin 2.

This event will mark the official launch of a three-year Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) project, directed by the IUA and managed by Irish university librarians, to build open access repositories in each Irish university library.

Commenced in April 2007, this innovative project involves the creation, in each university library, of a repository of publications by university staff, postgraduate research theses and other relevant publications of the participating institution. Following on from the creating of individual repositories of publications a national portal will be created, giving access to the research output of the seven participating universities. This portal will provide a single point of access to the research output of the universities, free of charge via the World Wide Web. This will substantially increase the profile and visibility of Irish research. It is envisaged that the collaboration will be expanded to embrace more Irish research institutions in the future.

Frank Gannon, Director General of Science Foundation Ireland will give the keynote speech. This will be followed by demonstrations of institutional repositories by Suzanne Redmond Maloco, National University of Ireland Maynooth, Niamh Brennan, Trinity College Dublin, and Rachel Hill, Dublin City University.

7.3.3. Marie Curie Information Day

A national information event on a number of Marie Curie Schemes is being organised by the Marie Curie Office of the Irish Universities Association (IUA) on 15th May 2008 in the Science Gallery at Trinity College Dublin. The day will be divided into three distinct blocks of information:

Morning Session 10.30-12.30 Marie Curie Initial Training Networks (ITN)

First Afternoon Session 1.30-3pm Marie Curie Individual Actions

Final Session 3.00-5pm European Research Council – Starting Grants

For the first time in an IUA Marie Curie event, delegates are able to influence the format for the day by choosing which sessions are of interest to them via a specially designed web form. This method of pre-registration will ensure a tailor made event that more accurately meets the information needs of the audience.

7.4. Publications

7.4.1. 4th Level Ireland e-Brochures

The 4th Level Ireland brochure has now been made electronic. Spanish and English translations have been available for the last eight weeks. From 2nd April the Chinese version became available. The URL of access the finished product is www.i-studentadvisor.com/iua. The electronic brochure will also be available for download from the websites of the seven universities as well as the IUA website.

7.4.2. 4th Level Ireland Bookmark

To promote the new web address of the electronic 4th Level Ireland brochure, a bookmark was produced. This bookmark was distributed at the Europosgrados Fair in Mexico and more recently at an IBEC event at DCU. More copies of the bookmark are being printed and pens with the web address will also be ordered as part of the promotional drive for 4th Level Ireland.

8. Quality Assurance

8.1. IUQB Matters

8.1.1. IUQB Meetings

A meeting of the IUQB Board took place on 10th March 2008. The next meeting of the IUQB Board is scheduled for 30 June 2008.

8.1.2. IUQB AGM

The IUQB Annual General Meeting will take place in the National University of Ireland, Maynooth on 23rd June 2008.

8.1.3. IUQB Budget 2008

IUQB submitted a request for total funding for 2008 to the IUA Council (for the attention of the universities) and the HEA on 14 January 2008, requesting an equal contribution from both funding sources. IUQB received notification from the HEA on 28 January 2008 that the annual grant to IUQB would include an increase on budget received from the HEA in 2007. On 30 January 2008, IUQB received notification that the universities at the meeting of the IUA Council on 29 January 2008 had agreed to match the HEA contribution (a decrease from the budget received from the universities in 2007). The Chief Executive of IUA undertook to meet with the HEA Deputy Chief Executive to try and resolve the significant shortfall between the requested and allocated funds to IUQB from the universities and the HEA.

8.1.4. External Review of IUQB commissioned by the HEA

The review is a three-stand process which will examine: (i) the performance of IUQB under its objects as a company, (ii) IUQB activities funded by the HEA, (iii) whether IUQB substantially complies with the requirements of an external quality assurance agency under Part 3 of the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (the European Standards and Guidelines).

Further details such as the terms of reference for the review and the membership of the external panel appointed by the HEA to conduct the evaluation are available on the IUQB website: <http://www.iuqb.ie>

The IUQB self-evaluation report for the review and a statement of IUQB compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines were published on the IUQB website in January 2008.

The HEA organised a briefing session with the members of the external evaluation panel in the HEA on 3 March 2008. The briefing included a presentation from the IUQB Chief Executive.

The visit by the external panel will take place on 21-23 April 2008.

8.1.5. Sectoral Project Activities

Institutional Research (IR): The booklet is in the final stages of preparation. A pre-publication draft will be distributed to stakeholders on the week of the 17 March and feedback received will be used to fine tune the booklet text. The booklet is scheduled for printing on the week of the 7 April 2008.

An invitation to co-present a paper on this project at the first UK Institutional Research Conference which will be hosted in Southampton Solent University in June 2008 has been accepted. The paper will focus on the developmental nature of this IR project across the

educational sector. The second part of the paper presented by Aoife Flanagan, IR Officer, NUI Galway will focus on the development of an IR function within an Irish university.

Strategic Planning in Academic Units: The consultation exercise on the interim report of this project was completed in mid-February 2008 with useful feedback received. The editorial group met on the 19 February and a work programme for drafting the booklet was prepared. The group is currently working on drafting the chapters in preparation for publication and a pre-publication exercise which will take place from mid- to end-April 2008. The booklet is scheduled for publication on the week of the 19th May 2008.

An event to launch both of the above booklets will take place before the summer.

8.1.6. *IUQB Nationally*

The CEO made a presentation in the Department of Education and Science on 27 February 2008 entitled *Quality Assurance in Irish Universities* to a group of education journalists from India who were visiting Ireland. The Chief Executives of NQAI and HETAC also made presentations.

The CEO made a presentation on *Quality Assurance in Irish Universities* to the Students Union Council of Trinity College Dublin on 8 April 2008.

9. Charities Bill 2007

A working group has been set up to consider the issues arising from the Charities Bill in further detail.

10. Valuations Act 2001

At the joint meeting of UCFOG and the Secretaries group it was agreed that external expertise be engaged to advise in respect of a proposed change to the wording of the legislation to extend the exemptions available to universities.