

IUA Review [08/3] for IUA Meetings in NUIM on 23rd June, 2008.

	Section	Page No.
1.	CEO Report	4.
2.	Research	4.
2.1.	National Research Policy	4.
2.1.1.	<i>Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation 2006-2013</i>	4.
2.2.	Science Foundation Ireland	6.
2.2.1.	<i>Meeting with SFI Director General, Frank Gannon</i>	6.
2.2.2.	<i>New SFI Salary Guidelines</i>	6.
2.2.3.	<i>SFI Value for Money Review</i>	7.
2.3.	Fourth Level Ireland Network Group	7.
2.4.	Higher Education Authority	8.
2.4.1.	<i>PRTLII Cycle 4</i>	8.
2.4.2.	<i>PRTLII Cycle 5</i>	9.
2.4.3.	<i>Graduate Education Review</i>	9.
2.5.	EU Seventh Framework Programme	9.
2.5.1.	<i>IUA Marie Curie Office</i>	9.
2.5.2.	<i>'People' (Marie Curie) Programme</i>	9.
2.5.3.	<i>'Research Potential' Programme</i>	10.
2.5.4.	<i>European Network of National Contact Points for the 'People'(Marie Curie) Programme ["Mobility NCPs"]</i>	10.
2.5.5.	<i>FP7 National Support Structure</i>	10.
2.6.	Irish Researcher Mobility Office and Web portal	10.
2.6.1.	<i>Office and Funding</i>	10.
2.6.2.	<i>Events</i>	11.
2.6.3.	<i>Implementation of the Third Country Directive</i>	11.
2.7.	National Research Platform	11.
2.7.1.	<i>General</i>	11.
2.7.2.	<i>Use of Expertiseireland.com Data</i>	12.
2.7.3.	<i>Industry Input</i>	12.
2.7.4.	<i>Funding Agencies</i>	12.
2.7.5.	<i>Next Steps</i>	12.
		12.

3.	Strategic Innovation Fund	12.
3.1.	Irish Universities Study	12.
3.2.	SIF Projects	13.
4.	Funding	13.
4.1.	Recurrent Funding	13.
4.1.1.	<i>Current and Capital Funding</i>	13.
4.1.2.	<i>Tuition Fee Increase Submission 2008/09</i>	13.
4.1.3.	<i>Recurrent Grant Allocation Model</i>	13.
4.2.	Pension Issues	14.
4.3.	Full Economic Cost System	14.
4.4.	Strategic Planning & Decision Support SIF Project	14.
5.	HEA/Department of Education & Science	14.
5.1.	Equity of Access to Higher Education	14.
5.1.1.	<i>HEAR Scheme – National Roll-out</i>	14.
5.1.2.	<i>Supplementary Admission for Students with a Disability</i>	15.
5.1.3.	<i>Collection of ‘Access’ Data – Data Protection Issues</i>	15.
5.2.	HEA National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2010	16.
5.3.	Higher Education Grants Scheme	16.
5.4.	Review of HE Access/Foundation Courses	16.
6.	Commission on Taxation	16.
7.	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland	17.
7.1.	Placement of University Postgraduate Diplomas, Higher Diplomas, and minor, special purpose, and supplemental awards on the NFQ	17.
7.2.	IUA/NQAI Framework Implementation Network	17.
7.3.	OECD Project on Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning	18.
7.4.	Study of the Implementation and Impact of the National Framework of Qualifications	18.
8.	Internationalisation / Work Permits	18.
9.	Garda Vetting	19.
10.	Communications / Events	20.
10.1.	Marketing the University Sector and IUA Services	20.
10.1.1.	<i>4th Level Ireland Website Development</i>	20.
10.1.2.	<i>Communications Group Meeting</i>	20.
10.2.	Events	20.

10.2.1.	<i>Launch of Irish Universities Study and Ron Ehrenberg Lecture</i>	20.
10.2.2.	<i>Marie Curie Information Day</i>	20.
10.2.3	<i>Demonstration of IUA University Library Institutional Repositories</i>	21.
10.2.4	<i>Joint IUQB/IUA/UCD 4th Level Conference</i>	21.
10.3.	Publications	21.
10.3.1.	<i>Open Access to Irish University Research</i>	21.
11.	Survey on Philanthropic Giving	22.
12.	IUQB / Quality Assurance	22.
12.1.	IUQB Matters	22.
12.1.1.	<i>IUQB Meetings</i>	22.
12.1.2.	<i>IUQB AGM</i>	22.
12.1.3.	<i>IUQB Budget 2008</i>	22.
12.1.4.	<i>IUQB Staffing and Review Activity</i>	23.
12.1.5.	<i>IUQB Conference 2008</i>	23.
12.1.6.	<i>External Review of IUQB commissioned by the HEA</i>	23.
12.1.7.	<i>Sectoral Project Activities</i>	24.
12.1.8.	<i>IUQB Nationally</i>	24.
13.	Charities Bill 2007	24.

IUA Review [08/3] for IUA Meetings in NUI Maynooth on 23rd June, 2008.

1. CEO Report

2. Research

2.1. National Research Policy

2.1.1. *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. There are currently three active working groups, namely -

- ***Capacity Development***

The group met on 22nd April focusing on the delivery of SSTI target numbers, the IUA SIF Irish Universities Study and the IUA proposal for Co-ordinated Research Audit. The IUA is represented at these meetings by C. O'Carroll, W. Forsythe and M. Ryan (UCD and Chair of Deans of Graduate Studies).

1. *SSTI Numbers*

There was a presentation from HEA on latest data. While the numbers for PhD students and researchers seem to be on track there is a problem with the number of PI's. However this seems to be due to an issue around definition and they committed to report more accurate figures at the next meeting on 18th June.

2. *Co-ordinated Research Audit*

This proposal was made to the Working Group by the IUA at the meeting on 11th January, 2008. This is still under discussion with the agencies; HEA and HRB will bring it to their Board and report back to meeting on 18th June.

3. *Irish Universities Study*

Dr. Liam Delaney from the Geary Institute in UCD made a presentation on preliminary results from the IUA SIF project, Irish Universities Study. It is now known that there is a strong international mix within the PhD population (about 30%). Also it has emerged that 50% of undergraduate students intend to pursue a postgraduate degree and half of those a PhD.

- ***High Level Indicators***

There have been no developments or meetings since previous review.

- ***Researcher Careers***

The new IUA Strategy and Strategic Innovation (SSI) committee held its first meeting on 22nd May. The issue of Research Careers was discussed following the IUA meeting on the 1st April. The main outcome was that a working group will be appointed with representation from VPDOR, UCFOG, Registrars and Secretaries to follow up and develop a proposal.

At the full HERG meeting on the 14th May the ASC Taskforce on Research Careers, led by Dolores Cahill (UCD), presented the Council's recommendations on Research Careers. This report was originally based on a survey carried out by Technopolis on behalf of Forfas. This was a deeply flawed study and the first report was of very poor quality. Following strong IUA representations (and from HEA and IBEC) the ASC continued the work themselves in consultation with IUA and produced the attached report, due to be published on the 20th May.

There has been significant EU activity on the issue of Research careers as part of the renewal of the Lisbon agenda. A key element of the EC green paper, published in Summer 2007, was the intent to create a single labour market for Researchers. The Commission established an Expert Group (C. O'Carroll IUA a member) to prepare a report and make recommendations. As a member of the expert group COC ensured that the IUA and Irish perspective were taken into account. The expert group report contains many examples of best practise in Ireland. Following wide consultation and the recommendations of the Expert Group the Commission has produced the communication, 'Better Careers and More Mobility: A European Partnership for Researchers' (COM 2008 317). The expert group report and the EC Communication focus on four areas:

1. Open recruitment and portability of grants
2. Social security and pension needs of researchers
3. Attractive employment and working conditions
4. Enhancing training, skills and experience of researchers

The EC called for each Member State to adopt a national action plan in 2009 with priority actions to be implemented by the end of 2010. This gives the universities the opportunity to take the lead in developing the Irish national action plan. This can be done in conjunction with the development of sustainable research careers in Ireland.

2.2. Science Foundation Ireland

2.2.1. 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.

2.2.2. *New SFI Salary Guidelines*

SFI raised the issue of salaries for researchers hired under SFI funded projects. They are concerned that many people are being put on the higher rates of the IUA Researcher Salary Scale [top costs up to €135K]. As a consequence they are planning to introduce Salary Guidelines for future calls and this has been discussed at two dedicated meetings on 15th May and 5th June. In summary the guidelines propose;

- SFI will pay contributions to salaries of team members according to new guidelines that will be based on the IUA scales. SFI expects that the majority of funded teams will be composed of post-graduate students and post-doctorate researchers.
- SFI will not pay the salary of the grant applicant/co-applicant.
- SFI will contribute a defined annual cost of living increase and single point salary increments to eligible salaries.
- SFI will not pay direct employer pension contributions *via its programme grants*. SFI will meet its financial obligations with respect to the Fixed Term Workers Act for all new awards granted from 1 January, 2006 onwards, once clarification has been received on the nature of the pension scheme to be put in place.
- SFI will fund the cost to replace an SFI-funded team member who is on paid maternity or long term sick leave.
- SFI will contribute to the cost of fees and will pay a set stipend to post-graduate students.

While there was broad agreement on some of the proposals (recognition of IUA Researcher Salary Scale) the universities have issues with pension policy and non payment of redundancy. There were two meetings with SFI to discuss the implications of this new policy (16th May and 5th June)

2.2.3. *SFI Value for Money Review*

The INDECON report on SFI is almost completed and a final meeting of the Steering Committee (C. O'Carroll a member) is expected soon. The overall conclusions are that SFI has been a good investment and a success in retaining PIs in Ireland and collaborating with industry. Recommendations include one that stresses greater academic/industry collaboration especially with indigenous companies.

2.3. **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.

Activities this period

- The Network has agreed on the final wording, purpose and structure of the Irish universities' graduate student skills statement. The statement will receive consideration at the IUA council on 23 June.
- The Network coordinator has participated in events to promote the statement's role and potential usages. These include an event in UCC in May entitled 'Broadening horizons for PhD students in the Arts, Humanities and Social Science' and a presentation at NUI Galway's Heads' and Deans' conference in April on the Fourth Level Network and its role.
- The Network coordinator participated in UCC's postgraduate 'New Voices' conference that included participation in a debate on the changing nature and role of PhD education.
- Work continues on a position paper entitled 'Realising 4th Level Ireland: implementing structured PhD programmes', which will outline the needs of structured PhD programmes to policy makers and funders.
- Further discussions with Queen's University Belfast have taken place on the exploration of potential areas for collaboration on graduate education with the IUA universities.
- Both the Network coordinator and the Chair of the Network attended the inaugural meeting of the EUA's Council for Doctoral Education. The priorities the 275 delegates agreed would form the corpus of the council's work include the development of graduate school/programme structures, the incorporation of skills training, supervisory practices and quality assurance and review.
- The Fourth Level Network is collaborating with the IUQB on the organisation of a major conference/forum entitled '*Opportunities and challenges in developing Fourth Level education.*' The organising committee have confirmed most speakers and the event will take place at UCD on 14-15 October.
- The Network continues to liaise effectively with the IUQB on the development and execution of a review of the implementation of the *National guidelines on good practice in the organisation of PhD programmes*, which will take place over the summer.
- The Network continues to liaise with the HEA on the development and execution of the HEA's review of structured PhD education that will take place during the summer. Both reviews will provide input to the conference in October.
- Completion of initial iteration of the Fourth Level Ireland website.
- The Network continues to liaise with UCD's Geary Institute on the development and delivery of the Irish Universities' study.

Activities for the next period

- The Network Coordinator will participate in and present at the bi-annual Graduate Careers Ireland conference in Galway on 26 June, which will discuss the role of Careers Services in the development and support of structured PhD programmes and students.
- Finalisation of the position paper ‘implementing PhD programmes’ and its presentation to the Higher Education Research Group working group on research capacity.
- Continued planning and organisation of the IUA-IUQB conference on 4th Level Ireland in October 2008.
- Development of a ‘credit transfer agreement’ to ensure the efficient operation of inter-institutional structured PhD programmes and developing agreed practices on the registration and recording of student participation on structured elements of inter-institutional graduate schools/programmes.
- On 1 July, a meeting will take place between the Network and Queen’s University to progress initial exploration of potential collaboration in PhD education.
- Network participation at the UK Council for Graduate Education in July, which will consider and discuss the impact of the Bologna process on doctoral education.
- Continued development of the Fourth Level Ireland website and consideration by the Network on its content and purpose.
- Dissemination and promotion of the skills statement.
- Continued liaison with UCD’s Geary Institute on the Irish Universities’ study, including the provision on input into the specific areas of interest in graduate education.

2.4. Higher Education Authority

2.4.1. PRTL I Cycle 4

All the universities have received a letter regarding the reporting of under-spending on the PRTL I 4 projects. The universities need to respond to the letter by 12th June. The universities have under-spent up to this point owing to common issues: receiving the funding late and the project starting in the middle of an academic year along with recruited students not starting until October. There was concern that the programme does not allow for a ‘ramp up’ phase. Money is expected to be spent straight away without allowing for a preparation period. This has a knock on effect at the other end of the cycle so the project time has to be extended. A common letter representing the VP/DOR group was sent from the IUA, however each university will respond themselves so seven individual letters will also be sent in response.

2.4.2. PRTL I Cycle 5

The PRTL I 5 call has not been made yet and there was concern with the two month deadline going over the summer. During a conference call Dr. E. Meehan HEA explained that there has been a delay in the PRTL I call because the government has put in place a new procedure for the allocation of funding. Any major announcement needs to be reviewed up to Taoiseach level. Whenever the announcement takes place, the month of August will be discounted as a month in the two month deadline. This is to take into

account holidays and the difficulty of organising consultations throughout August. The process of the call and the parameters are very similar to previous calls so the institutions do not need to prepare for any changes in the structure of the call.

2.4.3. Graduate Education Review

The HEA is conducting a review of structured PhD provision in Irish Higher Education Institutions. The HEA committed to this piece of work through its participation in the Higher Education Research Group (HERG) and this review is one of the key implementation structures for the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (SSTI).

2.5. EU Seventh Framework Programme

2.5.1. IUA Marie Curie Office

As mentioned in previous reviews, the Marie Curie Office is not only involved in the promotion of the Marie Curie programme (and to a lesser extent the Research Potential programme) and in assisting applicants and contractors with all issues related to the preparation of their proposals and the implementation of their projects. The NCP also regularly participates in a range of other activities related to mobility and research careers in a broader sense. Among others, she has been invited to contribute to the official Bologna seminar “*Penalized for Being Mobile? National Pension Schemes as an Obstacle to Mobility for Researchers in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)*” organised by the German Rectors’ Conference (HRK) in Berlin on 12-13 June. She has also been asked to join a Round Table discussion on researcher mobility at the French EU Presidency Conference on “*Young Researchers in Europe*” which will take place in Rennes/France in November.

2.5.2. ‘People’ (Marie Curie) Programme

The next deadlines in the Marie Curie programme will be the one for the Initial Training Networks (ITN) on 2 September and those for the three types of Individual Fellowships (IEF, IOF, IIF) on 19 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, the Marie Curie Office is organising a number of dedicated workshops in various institutions across Ireland. The first workshop in the series took place at UL on 5 June, others will follow at UCC, NUIM, TCD, and DCU. More locations may be added, depending on demand.

In collaboration with the ERC National Contact Point at SFI the Marie Curie Office also organised a “*Marie Curie & ERC National Information Day*” on 15 May, which took place at the TCD Science Gallery. The event covered the ITNs and the Marie Curie Individual actions, and also included a special session on the Starting Grants of the European Research Council. The meeting was very well attended and received very positive feedback.

Apart from organising and participating in Marie Curie events in Ireland, the Irish National Contact Point is also occasionally asked to contribute to events organised by other NCPs and to present success stories from Ireland at their meetings. This was for example the case at the Marie Curie National Information Day on 19 May in Madrid, which was organised by the “European Office” at the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science in collaboration with the Spanish Marie Curie National Contact Point.

2.5.3. ‘Research Potential’ Programme

The Work programme 2008 for “Research Potential” does not contain any call in which Irish institutions could participate as coordinators. Consequently, the NCP hardly received any questions from researchers interested in the programme. This will probably change when the calls from the 2009 Work programme are published as they will contain opportunities also for researchers at Irish institutions.

2.5.4. European Network of National Contact Points for the ‘People’ (Marie Curie) Programme (“Mobility NCPs”)

Negotiations for the European Network of ‘People’ NCPs (“PeopleNetwork”) in which IUA participates as Work Package leader are in principle over, but administrative issues related to the legal status of some of the consortium partners have led to further delays in the preparation of the Grant Agreement. It is unclear at this point when the project will finally be launched. In fact, the start date may have to be postponed until after the summer (the originally envisaged starting date was 1 April).

2.5.5. 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. The network is currently investigating ways for a more strategic approach to supporting institutions with regard to their participation in the Framework Programme.

2.6. Irish Researcher Mobility Office and Web Portal

2.6.1. Office and Funding

The role of the Mobility Office has been expanded to manage the implementation of the Third Country Directive and as a consequence there is a new staff member, Dr Magdalena Wislocka. The DETE allocation in 2008 for managing the researcher mobility office has risen to €90,000, 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.

2.6.2. Events

The research Mobility Office displayed information brochures as well as provided information to participants of a national information event on Marie Curie Schemes which was held on 15th May 2008 in the Science Gallery at Trinity College Dublin. The day

was divided into three distinct information blocks, was well attended and delegates from all nine universities in Ireland, a number of IOT's and industry were represented. Participation in a number of other key events is planned over the coming months.

2.6.3. Implementation of the Third Country Directive

The IUA Mobility Office is playing a central role in the official accreditation and immigration process of the hosting agreement scheme. This means that any non EU researcher coming to Ireland to work in a Higher Education Institute or company is validated and processed by the IUA Mobility Office in conjunction with DETE and the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB). To date the Office has submitted 217 (83 since last review) approved agreements to immigration. The highest number of hosting agreements was issued by UCD (54) and NUIG (51) followed by UCC (36) and TCD (34). The remaining accredited research institutions signed up 42 hosting agreements (UL 17; NUIM 10; DCU 5; TEAG 6, WIT 2 and AIT and ICGP 1).

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.

2.7. National Research Platform

The Project Initiation Meeting was held on May 1st, 2008, with representatives from the higher education sector research and technology transfer offices, publicly funded research organisations, IBEC, Enterprise Ireland, IDA, and Forfás. A second smaller meeting was held to discuss the project plan, the results of which are outlined below.

2.7.1. General

During the discussion it was agreed that, for success, the two key Departments of Education & Science and Enterprise, Trade & Employment must buy in to this platform. There needs to be some type of data standardisation – e.g., Cerif. There needs to be a tool for policy formulation – e.g., National Citation Report and international partnership.

2.7.2. Use of *expertiseireland.com* Data

The quality of the information is crucial; there are concerns about the quality of the information on *expertiseireland.com* and the commitment of the higher education sector to updating this information. It is not clear if moving to a new Platform will improve the quality of the data. For example, some expert profiles have a last updated date of 2004. Some Institutions have installed new research management systems which are not linked to *expertiseireland.com* so their information is out of date on the portal. There must be strong reasons for researchers to commit to updating information; it follows that the National Research Platform must be of high value to them. The responsibility for

ensuring up to date information will lie with individual researchers (bottom up) but there must be a strong institutional commitment (top down).

2.7.3. Industry Input

Brokering is a key part of any industry collaboration. Providing information for the identification of collaborators is very useful but face to face meetings are more fruitful in sealing deals. The presentation of information on a National Research Platform will be crucial for industry to use the portal and it was pointed out that industry will want technology information. There also needs to be a comprehensive industry view and needs definition as industry needs will vary from discipline to discipline.

2.7.4. Funding Agencies

The study should investigate the potential role of the funding agencies, national and international (e.g., Cordis). For example, national funding agencies have different requirements for funding submission; the possibility of streamlining should be studied.

2.7.5. Next Steps

In order to progress it was agreed that there will be two groups formed under the main headings of Research and Technology Transfer, which will be chaired by David Lloyd and Pat Frain respectively. Each group will have Industry representatives as members. In pursuing the feasibility study there will be wide consultation with key shareholders in academia and business/industry.

3. Strategic Innovation Fund

3.1. Irish Universities Study

The IUS was formally launched by Dr. Hugh Brady on 15th April. The first module of the survey has almost been completed and has sampled about 5% of the total undergraduate and graduate student population in the seven universities with a response rate of 30%. The data from this round are being currently analysed and a presentation on results will be given at the Plenary Meeting on 23rd June. Preliminary results were presented to the Registrars (14th April) and VP / Deans of Research (5th June). The Researcher Module will be launched in July and the second module for students in October.

3.2. SIF Projects

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

Fourth Level Ireland – *Section 2.3.*

Full Economic Costing System – *Section 4.3.*

Strategic Planning and Decision Support – *Section 4.4.*

Access: Widening Participation – *Section 5.1.*

Open Access – *Section 10.2.3. and Section 10.3.1.*

4. Funding

4.1. Recurrent Funding

4.1.1. *Current and Capital Funding*

Following recent budget meetings between individual institutions and the HEA at which a number of universities reported that they were currently carrying accumulated deficits and were projecting further deficits for 2008 the HEA subsequently wrote to the institutions involved requesting revised breakeven budgets for 2008 and a detailed plan for addressing accumulated deficits in the short-term. It was agreed that there would be some co-ordination in responding to the HEA in terms of the messages which universities should be sending particularly in relation to the factors underlying deficits and the balanced approach to their resolution.

UCFOG continues to work with IUA Council in developing proposals for a sustainable funding system for Irish universities.

4.1.2. *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.

4.1.3. *Recurrent Grant Allocation Model*

Following recent meetings between IUA Registrars and UCFOG, discussions have now begun with the HEA regarding the ongoing implementation of the RGAM. These discussions include a number of issues which had been left to one side during the first phase of implementation of this model, such as the position in the model of non-EU research students and of university students on NFQ Level 6 and 7 programmes. The discussions also cover issues raised during the audit of student numbers and university systems, and include the issue of the allocation of modules to price bands.

4.2. Pension Issues

In early May 2008 the Cabinet approved in principle the proposal that the assets of the university pension funds and the liabilities of the schemes be taken over by the state subject to a number of conditions. This is a very positive development and in effect will mean that member's entitlements will be guaranteed by the State. The IUA and individual institutions will need to work with the HEA and Department of Finance in relation to advancing the proposal. The most pressing requirement is for universities to consider and agree in principle to the proposal subject to the legislative detail.

There remain a number of operational issues to be addressed arising from the proposal and these are being dealt with through a number of IUA working groups, which are reporting to UCFOG.

4.3. Full Economic Cost System

The SIF Cycle I FEC project has completed successfully and the SIF Cycle II project relating to the detailed design and implementation of the FEC system has now commenced. Institutional FEC project steering groups and FEC project managers are in place and institutions are commencing work on the implementation plans agreed with JM Consulting. The IUA has appointed a central project manager who will be in place by the end of July. An interim project manager has been appointed until then. Each university has been allocated responsibility for leading one of seven national projects and detailed project plans are currently being developed by university FEC managers. Meetings with key stakeholder groups are also being held to consider and address potential issues that may impact on implementation.

4.4. Strategic Planning & Decision Support SIF Project

A meeting of the project steering group took place on 22nd May 2008. The steering group reviewed and approved a number of reports subject to some amendments. The group also considered a short-list of potential indicators and it was agreed that each IUA group would consider the indicators identified in their particular areas and make recommendations in relation to the most appropriate indicators for consideration for inclusion within the overall ‘headline’ set of indicators.

5. Access

5.1. Equity of Access to Higher Education

5.1.1. HEAR Scheme – National Roll-out

There is agreement that a full national HEAR scheme (integrated into the CAO) will be operationalised for entry in 2010. The IUA (in consultation with key stakeholder groups) will now focus on scoping-out and agreeing a Project Plan for 2008-2010 and begin implementation of interim actions in September 08 in preparation for full roll-out. The process of compiling a Risk Register and identifying steps that need to be taken to mitigate these risks was most useful. The risks that presented greatest concern related to:

- Establishment of Central Assessment Facility in a host HEI
- Management of queries in a systematic and consistent manner in 2009
- Scaling-up of number of places available to meet increased demand and management of offers/admissions process.

The Project Plan will be presented to the IUA Registrar’s Group and DIT Director of Academic Affairs for input and sign-off in October 08.

5.1.2. Supplementary Admission for Students with a Disability

A statistical analysis of the 2006 and 2007 schemes was completed by IUA and presented to its Access Project Advisory Group as well as the Disability Officers network (DAWN) for consideration and feedback. In spite of the acknowledged weaknesses in aspects of

the data, the analysis provides substantial information for the first time on the overall (common) scheme. The Disability Officers group have focused in 2008 on developing rigorous and systematic quality control measures to support the assessment of eligibility process.

5.1.3. Collection of 'Access' Data – Data Protection Issues

Representatives from IUA, HEA, CAO and NUIM Registrar met with the Deputy Data Protection Commissioner on 28 May 2008 to seek clarification and guidance on data protection issues as they relate to universities gathering personal background data from applicants for the purpose of:

- Assessment of applications to the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR);
- HEA Return of student records
- Supplementary Admissions for students with a disability.

Overall the meeting was extremely positive. In terms of HEAR, as long as applicants voluntarily opt into the scheme & then consent to provide data (and evidence) directly relevant to the eligibility criteria, there are no data protection difficulties. The universities are entitled to collect the data themselves from students who opt into the scheme or we can mandate the CAO or any other contractor to collect this data on our behalf subject to the appropriate contracts being in place. Obviously the universities need to comply with the requirement of the Data Protection Act in determining precisely what (minimum) data is required, security of that data, disclosure of the data and deletion of data.

On the question of the universities passing the data onto the HEA for all new entrants (as part of the Student Record) - this can only be undertaken if the HEA is named, at point of consent, as an agency who will receive the personal data. The format and extent of data to be passed onto the HEA must also be made clear to the students (e.g. will it be passed on with/without personal identifiers in place).

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

Following several drafts and an effective consultation process with which the IUA executive engaged fully, the HEA authority has approved a new national access strategy. It is expected that this document will be launched by the Minister in early July. The document is not yet available publicly, but includes a number of key challenges and targets in each access field.

5.3. Higher Education Grants Scheme

The DES Equity of Access Unit (formerly known as the HE Grants Section) is committed to a programme of modernisation of the HE grant scheme over the next couple of years in line with introduction of the Student Support Bill. Representatives from IUA Fees

Managers Group, IUA Access Officers Group and IUA Executive contributed to a recent consultation meeting hosted by DES. Key features of new scheme to include:

- Monthly payments to students (9 per academic year with larger first payment in Sept/Oct)
- Payment will be by electronic transfer to student's bank account
- Grants will be administered solely by VECs and a centralised (interactive) data management system will be established.

A final decision still needs to be made on the issue of 'verification of attendance' of grant holders in order to minimise loss of public funds to students who have officially or unofficially withdrawn from college. A robust verification system is required by the Controller and Auditor General. The DES is proposing that three existing proxies of active registration be adopted (universally) by all HEIs to meet this requirement.

5.4. Review of HE Access/Foundation Courses

The IUA, IOTI, individual HEIs (Access Offices), HEA-NAO and DES-Equity of Access have come together to commission a review of HE Access/Foundation Courses with the view to contributing with some authority to the current debate on which sector is best placed to deliver these courses and the nature of future provision. An independent research consultant has been contracted (by IUA on behalf of the other organisations) to undertake the review which should be completed by Oct 08. Costs of the review are split between IUA, IOTI and HEA (which HEA contributed over 50% of the cost).

6. Commission on Taxation

The University of Limerick's National Centre for Taxation Studies made a submission on behalf of the IUA to the Commission on Taxation in May 2008.

7. National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

7.1. Placement of University Postgraduate Diplomas, Higher Diplomas, and Minor, Special Purpose, and Supplemental Awards on the NFQ

Following two years of discussion and preparation, in June 2008 the IUA informed the NQAI of the placement of the seven universities' Postgraduate Diplomas, Higher Diplomas, minor, special purpose and supplemental awards on the NFQ, according to the protocol agreed in 2006. This was accompanied by letters from each university providing details as to how this process was undertaken in each university. Progress is also being made regarding NUI awards, and the placement of these on the NFQ will follow in due course.

It should be noted that, since discussions regarding the award formerly known as the H.Dip. Education are ongoing, this award has not yet been placed on the NFQ. There is a small number of other awards where no placement is currently proposed pending outcomes of ongoing discussions.

It should likewise be noted that all programmes and the accompanying awards are reviewed on a regular basis, which may result in a change in placement, which should be notified to the NQAI. Such change can also include the addition of new programmes leading to an award. A number of universities are currently reviewing the status of their Level 6 and 7 awards and in such cases these have not been included in the current round, but will be placed in due course.

7.2. IUA / NQAI Framework Implementation Network

The third meeting of the joint IUA / NQAI Framework Implementation Network took place on 21 April 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.

The next meeting of the Framework Implementation Network will take place on 22 September 2008.

7.3. 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 4-8 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 was received in May 2008 and extensive feedback has been provided to the OECD team by the project steering group. A finalised report is expected in July.

7.4. 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 is coordinating a report from the university sector, following the outline proposal tabled for IUA Registrars on 14 April 2008. Study visits are currently being organised, one to a university and one to a college of education. The draft reports will be completed by July 2008, and the overall study will finish in early 2009.

8. Internationalisation / Work Permits

Following receipt of a proposal from DETE regarding an employment permit scheme for non-EEA students, see IUA Review April 2008, the IUA responded with a letter outlining its support for certain aspects of the proposed scheme (no labour market needs tests, students doing an internship as an integral part of a university academic course will not be obliged to apply for a work permit), and expressing its dismay at other elements contained in the proposal, in particular at the creation of what would appear 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.

9. Garda Vetting

On 2 April 2007 the IUA Registrars agreed in principle to an *IUA Policy for Garda Vetting*. This policy is relevant for a number of programmes in the University sector, especially in the areas of medicine, health, social work and education, which require students to undertake placements that bring them into contact with children or vulnerable

adults and in which they assume positions of trust. To ensure the protection of the public, and justify public trust and confidence, the Universities committed to ensuring that only suitable candidates are allowed to undertake these programmes and agreed to use the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) vetting service to assess the suitability of such applicants, and in some cases, to seek an enhanced disclosure by the completion of an affidavit.

This policy has now been in operation for a year and the IUA authorised signatories agreed that it was timely to conduct a review of the process. The authorised signatories are those seven people who were nominated to make the formal request for Garda vetting on behalf of each University, manage the applications for Garda vetting and also the information received from the GCVU, in line with the IUA policy on Garda Vetting.

An analysis of the data collected in this review indicates that Garda Vetting is now a significant activity undertaken by the IUA sector. In 2007/2008 academic year the IUA sector received information from the GCVU for almost 6,000 students, which required a considerable input of staff time, university resources and support from the GCVU. Some of the students vetted in 2007/2008 were not first year students as for some universities this was the first year that vetting was undertaken and consequently there was some 'catch-up' involved. In 2008/2009 the numbers are expected to fall to by 33% to approximately 4,000 students.

In general, given the numbers involved, and the fact that it was a new procedure, the process went well in 2007/2008. Positive aspects noted included that the Garda Vetting process made applicants aware of the requirements of these programmes, raised issues prior to registration and identified students unsuitable for placement within programme. However, there were a number of areas identified where improvements could be made and these will be reviewed internally in each university and with the GCVU.

10. Communications / Events

10.1. Marketing the University Sector and IUA Services

10.1.1. 4th Level Ireland Website Development

Content for the new website of 4th Level Ireland has been uploaded and a working site created. This site is in its infancy and work is ongoing to bring it up to a desirable level at which to launch the website. The working site can be viewed on <http://www.designhouse.ie/4th-level/index.html>. Our aim is to have the site fully functional and comprehensive in time for the joint IUA/IUQB/UCD 4th Level conference in October.

10.1.2. Communications Group Meeting

The third meeting of the IUA Communications Group was held on 16th April. The meeting was a first for NUI Galway's newly appointed Communications Manager, Caroline Loughnane. The main items discussed included Funding, Capital & Infrastructure issues. A presentation was made to the group by Joan Fogarty, Communications Officer in IUQB outlining communications success and challenges. The Group agreed to assist the IUQB where possible in disseminating their communications messages, newsletters etc. Part of the meeting was held in the HEA where senior HEA Managers made presentations to the group on topics such as PRTLI, Core Grant Allocation and the National Access Strategy.

10.2. Events

10.2.1. Launch of Irish Universities Study and Ron Ehrenberg Lecture

A joint IUA/Geary Institute event: “*Higher Education Research: National and International Perspectives*” was held on April 15th at Royal College of Physicians. The event marked the launch of the Irish Universities Study (IUS), a three year longitudinal study of the 3rd and 4th Level populations of the seven universities. Dr Hugh Brady launched the survey and Professor Colm Harmon, Director of the UCD Geary Institute presented preliminary results. The keynote speaker was Professor Ronald G. Ehrenberg, Director of the Cornell Higher Education Research Institute.

Presentations made and photographs taken at the event can be viewed on the IUA website. <http://www.iaa.ie/media-and-events/events-conferences/events/2007/ehrenbergIrishUniversitiesStudy.html>

The launch was featured in the May issue of Knowledge Ireland .

10.2.2. Marie Curie Information Day

A national information event on a number of Marie Curie Schemes was held on 15th May 2008 in the Science Gallery at Trinity College Dublin. The day was divided into three distinct blocks of information: Marie Curie Initial Training Networks (ITN), Marie Curie Individual Actions and European Research Council – Starting Grants. The event was well attended and delegates from all nine universities in Ireland, a number of IOT's and industry were represented.

Presentations made at the event are available for download from the IUA Website. <http://www.iaa.ie/marie-curie/events-and-training/MCInfoDayMay1508.html>

10.2.3. Open Access to University Research – A Celebration!

A demonstration of institutional repositories - the first results of IReL Open Access to Research Project – was held on 18th May in the Science Gallery. This event marked celebrated the ongoing success 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.

Frank Gannon, Director General of Science Foundation Ireland, who has considerable knowledge of this area, gave the keynote speech. This was 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. All libraries of all seven universities were represented during the demo session and UL in particular used the event to make public the launch of their repository which has only gone live the day before the event. The event was a great success, with senior management and academics from across the sector attending in large numbers.

Presentations and photographs from the event can be found on the IUA website.
<http://www.iua.ie/media-and-events/events-conferences/events/2007/OpenAccessToResearch.html>

10.2.4. Joint IUA/IUQB/UCD 4th Level Conference

Pre planning has begun on this joint conference entitled “*Opportunities and Challenges in Developing 4th Level Education*”. The conference is planned for October 14th and 15th and will be held in O’Reilly Hall in UCD. At this early stage in planning almost all identified speakers have already confirmed their availability. Themes for the conference will include –

1. Overarching Trends such as drivers for development of new models of PhD programmes including Global, Supranational, National, Regional and Institutional.
2. Quality Assurance, Evaluation and Review including student progression and completion, supervisor training etc.
3. Skills Acquisition and Career Options

10.3. Publications

10.3.1. Open Access to Irish University Research

A brochure explaining the SIF IR Project was produced and distributed at the Open Access event held on 16th May. An initial print run of 1000 has already been handed out and a second print run is planned. As well as outlining the activities of the seven universities the importance of the project is underlined through endorsement by the seven presidents and provost.

The brochure is available for download from the IUA website and hard copies can be requested - <http://www.iua.ie/publications/index.html>

11. Survey on Philanthropic Giving

The Forum on Philanthropy is currently seeking to establish the level of philanthropic giving in Ireland and Universities were recently invited to complete a survey in this regard. The survey is being led by Philanthropy Ireland on behalf of the Forum on

Philanthropy, who have engaged the assistance of Prospectus Consultants. The Forum on Philanthropy was established by the Government at the end of 2006 in order to promote a philanthropic culture and an encouraging environment for philanthropy in Ireland.

From an IUA perspective we believe the universities can benefit from this work in an environment that makes us increasingly reliant on diversifying our sources of funding and raising philanthropic donations.

12. Quality Assurance

12.1. IUQB Matters

12.1.1. IUQB Meetings

The next meeting of the IUQB Board will take place on 30 June 2008.

12.1.2. IUQB AGM

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

12.1.3. IUQB Budget 2008

In April, IUQB submitted a request for additional funding for 2008 to the HEA and the universities (through IUA). Following a meeting between IUQB and HEA executive staff, the HEA agreed that €60,000 from IUQB 'reserves' attributable to HEA funding could be applied in 2008, in addition to the €420,000 already allocated to IUQB in January 2008 by the HEA. Following this agreement, the universities (through IUA Council meeting on 14 April) agreed university subscriptions to IUQB of €480,000 for 2008.

It was also agreed that IUQB, HEA and the universities (acting through IUA) would meet in Autumn 2008 to discuss and agree funding for IUQB for 2009.

12.1.4. IUQB Staffing and Review Activity

Following the agreement of a budget for 2008 and in line with the agreed recommendation of the Hay Group report on IUQB staffing in 2007, IUQB recruited (following public advertisement) a Quality Reviews Manager, who will commence work in July 2008. The Quality Reviews Manager will have responsibility for IUQB review activities including the development (in consultation with the universities and the HEA) of the operational procedures for the 2nd cycle of institutional reviews in 2009-10.

IUQB has also appointed a project co-ordinator for the period June-August 2008 to work on the review (agreed in 2006) of the adoption of the 2005 *IUQB National Guidelines for Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities*. The review

process will be developed in consultation with the universities through the 4th Level network represented by IUA and the Deans of Graduate Studies.

12.1.5. IUQB Conference 2008

The 6th Annual IUQB conference will be held in the O'Reilly Hall, UCD on 14-15 October 2008. The event with the working title of *Opportunities and Challenge in Developing 4th Level Education* will be run as a joint conference by IUQB and the IUA 4th Level network.

12.1.6. External Review of IUQB commissioned by the HEA

The review was a three-stand process which examined: (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).

The visit by the external panel (appointed by the HEA) took place on 21-23 April 2008. The review team were based in the HEA but undertook a visit to the IUQB offices as part of the review. The review team met with, among others, members of IUQB executive staff and Board members and a representative group of staff from university senior management, academic and administrative staff and students and with representatives from agencies and other bodies with responsibility for higher education including HEA, IUA, NQAI, HETAC and the Department of Education and Science.

The review report is expected to be finalised in June and will be published once formal responses have been approved at meetings of the IUQB Board and the HEA Authority. Other bodies will also be invited to comment on the report.

12.1.7. Sectoral Project Activities

Institutional Research: A pre-publication draft was distributed to stakeholders on the last week of March and feedback received was used to inform the booklet. In preparation for publication the booklet was submitted for professional proofreading and for layout and design. The booklet is now at the final proofing stage in advance of submission to the publisher.

Strategic Planning in Academic Units: The Editorial team met on the 2nd April, 17th April and 8th May 2008. A consultation exercise on a pre-publication draft of the booklet was completed in the first week of June. In preparation for publication the booklet was submitted for professional proofreading and for layout and design. The booklet is now at the final proofing stage in advance of submission to the publisher.

Both booklets will be launched by Tom Boland, Chief Executive of the HEA on the 30th June 2008 at a reception in the IUQB Offices.

12.1.8. IUQB Nationally

The CEO made a presentation on the *Adoption of IUQB National Guidelines on PhD Programmes in relation to practice-based research in the Arts* to the *Arts Research – State of Play* Conference in the Project Arts Centre on 8 May 2008.

The CEO also made a presentation on the recently-formed *European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)* to the Joint Ireland/UK Qualifications and Frameworks Group Meeting in NQAI on 10 June 2008.

13. Charities Bill 2007

The Charities Bill working group continues to assess and consider the issues and implications arising from the Charities Bill.