

IUA Review [09/3] for IUA Meetings in NUI, Galway on 8th June, 2009

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1. Research

1.1. National Research Policy – SSTI and the Innovation Island

In January we reported on the change in focus from the SSTI to the new government policy “*Building Ireland’s Smart Economy A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal*”. However, since then the focus of government departments and research funding bodies has remained on the SSTI targets. SSTI is always presented as an integrated plan with an overall budget that is delivered through a variety of government departments and funding agencies. Since the beginning of the year departments have been engaged in making cutbacks. It is clear that due to the dispersed nature of SSTI funding decisions are taken locally within each department on where to cutback without looking at the overall implications of these cuts on the SSTI. This was discussed at the last HERG meeting on 13th May and DETE stated that they are revising the SSTI targets in the context of cutbacks to date. SFI has already announced a 13% cutback for 2009 earlier this week (see Section 1.2).

1.1.1. Implementing SSTI 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. Updates on two of the working groups, Capacity Development and Research Careers are below:

- **Capacity Development**

1. *PhD Fees and Inflation*

On 27 May, SFI formally announced that it would fund PhD fees submissions at an annual inflation rate of 3 per cent. Institutional fees set in 2008-09 will constitute the baseline for these increases. Consequently, SFI will fund PhD fees for students registered in 2009-10 at the 08-09 baseline plus 3 per cent.¹ This annual inflation rate is consistent with a recent Universities Finance Officers’ recommendation. Other research funders might be giving consideration to adopting a similar approach.

¹ Science Foundation Ireland, *Grant application budget policy, 2009*, p. 8.
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Additionally, SFI's provision for PhD stipends will decline from €80,000 to €72,000. SFI suggest a payment profile of €16,650 in year one, and €17,550, €18,450, €19,350 in a studentship's successive years.²

2. *Definition of Structured PhD*

Members of the Fourth Level Network were instrumental in contributing to the response to the recent HEA review of structured PhD programmes, which the IUA submitted to the HEA on 20th February 2009.

3. *Co-ordinated Research Audit*

This proposal was made to the Working Group by the IUA at the beginning of 2008. A working group of research funder representatives rejected completely the IUA proposal (in November 2008). We agreed that this group should meet IUA representatives to discuss their (unhelpful) conclusion. However, to date there has been no response from the HEA. We will follow up with HEA given that in the light of budgetary cutbacks agencies must be more efficient at working together.

• ***Researcher Careers***

1. *National*

Following the rejection by the IUA of the Research Careers proposal from the DES/HEA, a revised proposal was circulated in March 2009. The IUA, through the Research Careers Group, has already commented on that proposal. It does meet the overall IUA requirements that include:

- Need for new Job Titles/Categories
- Determine associated standards of skills and competency
- Develop remuneration framework
- Put in place performance management and development system
- Promote mobility

The current draft has not costed nor agreed a funding mechanism to cover the costs of all of the above, especially continuous professional development and a performance management system

Progress has been stalled for the moment by DES pending the completion of an Employment Control Framework for the HE Sector.

2. *European*

In the context of the renewed Lisbon Agenda the European Commission with the agreement of the Member States is setting an agenda on a European Partnership for Researchers (EPR) focusing on the following four areas³:

² Ibid., p. 9.

³ 'Better Careers and More Mobility: A European Partnership for Researchers' (COM 2008 317).

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

A Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility has been established to oversee advances in these areas at national and European level. The Irish representatives are C. O'Carroll (IUA) and Brendan McCormack (DETE) and the group is chaired by F. Esposito (Rector of the University of Camerino, Italy). As part of this partnership each country has agreed to provide a National Action Plan 2009 to indicate progress in each of the four areas of the EPR. IUA is currently drafting a universities' position in this regard. The Deputy Director General of DG Research visited Dublin on 7th May 2009 to discuss the EPR along with senior members of the directorate.

1.2. Science Foundation Ireland

Science Foundation Ireland's (SFI) strategy over the coming five years is to make sure that certain key elements of the Government's plans are realised. This is contained in their new document "*Powering the Smart Economy, Science Foundation Ireland Strategy 2009-2013*".

(http://www.sfi.ie/uploads/documents/upload/English_SFI_Smart_Economy.pdf).

In the short time since it was established in 2000, SFI has repositioned Ireland in the world of scientific research, from a relatively poor under-performer to a significant force in the strategically important areas of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Biotechnology (BIO). The recent addition of Sustainable Energy & Energy Efficient Technologies (hereafter referred to as ENERGY) to SFI's remit presents the organisation with the opportunity to make a contribution to two of the most urgent issues facing the country: energy security and climate change. In the years immediately ahead, SFI will further align its activities with the Government's Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (SSTI) 2006-2013 and will contribute significantly to the delivery of the vision set out in Building Ireland's Smart Economy.

The task of SFI in this context will be to build scale in its research activities, while maintaining a high level of scientific excellence and an acute awareness of enterprise needs and commercial potential.

1. Human Capital:

Build a critical mass of internationally competitive research teams in the sciences and engineering underpinning BIO, ICT, and ENERGY, such that:

- ◆ The Irish workforce is upskilled to the needs of a high-tech economy,

- ◆ The absorptive capacity of the country is such that it can identify, acquire and incorporate externally developed technologies, and
- ◆ Ireland is well placed to attract and grow high-value enterprises.

The primacy of these areas may change in time in response to scientific and technological developments and enterprise needs. SFI will continually monitor developments to ensure the ongoing relevance of its programmes.

2. Quality Output:

Ensure that SFI-funded research teams continue to produce the highest quality output, as this is the best external endorsement of the scientific value obtained from research investment.

3. Global Reputation:

Increase Ireland's global reputation as a location of excellent scientific research and as a source of human and knowledge capital, such that businesses creating next-generation products and services are attracted to and retained in Ireland.

4. Knowledge Transfer:

Provide quality inputs to the technology transfer/ translational industries in Ireland, and grow partnerships that facilitate the expansion of the national RDI footprint, to ensure that research is optimally exploited for the benefit of Irish society.

This week SFI announced an overall 13% reduction in their budget for 2009 from €190m to €160m. This is a combination of recurrent and future investment. The main points are that some programmes will be put on hold and others reduced. In addition there is a reduction in the levels of stipends and salaries.

In response to this it was agreed by the VP / Deans of Research that the IUA Salary Scales should be revised in the light of budget reductions.

- This should be done in the context of the sector agreeing broad guidelines on a Research Career Structure
- We must be mindful of the fact that currently the researcher salaries are higher than counterparts in industry, especially SMEs
- It is also the case that researcher salaries are amongst the highest in Europe
- The scale allows people to progress to rates higher than lecturer and there is no performance evaluation in place

IUA will draw up a draft structure showing the existing range of scales [HRB, SFI, etc] and model the input of percentage cuts in the IUA scale. This will be done in the context

of a researcher career structure. This will be circulated next week for discussion at the IUA meeting in NUI Galway on 8th June 2009.

1.3. Fourth Level Ireland Network Group

1.3.1 Progress

On 26th February 2009 the Deans of Graduate Studies attended the second expert panel plenary meeting to consider the first draft of the updated *IUQB National guidelines of good practice on the organisation of PhD programmes*. This very successful meeting, involving the input of international experts from Britain, the United States and Europe, will inform the second draft.

In early April, the Fourth Level Network Deans of Graduate Studies represented the universities at the third plenary meeting of the expert panel to consider the updating of the *IUQB National Guidelines for the Organisation of PhD Programmes*.

On 24th February 2009 the HEA organised an information day for potential applicants to the second cycle of Erasmus Mundus. This cycle involves significant funding for joint doctoral and master programmes. The Fourth Level Network identified potential university applicants to this significant funding stream and provided them with the event's details. Further details are available from http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/doc72_en.htm

The Network, through the Network Co-ordinator participated in a number of events that will inform the IRCHSS foresight exercise in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

The Network Co-ordinator, IUA Director of Research and Network Chair will continue to represent the Network and the IUA on the HERG working group on Research Capacity. The working group will consider the outcome of the HEA structured PhD education review and the realisation of SSTI targets. Of particular importance will be the consideration of PhD fees inflation and the universities' explanation for an average sectoral inflation since 2004 of 9.37 per cent.

The Network is liaising with the IRCHSS to develop a mechanism that allows non-EU applicants to the postgraduate scholarship scheme in accordance with the 'Smart Economy's' goal of 'recruiting top international research talent.'

The Network Co-ordinator has participated in a number of university events explaining the use of the IUA PhD graduates skills statement.

In April the Network Co-ordinator presented on the introduction of structured PhD programmes and the skills statement at the GradIreland graduate recruiters' conference.

In early March 2009, the Network launched the www.4thlevelireland.ie website. The website will act as

- a promotional tool highlighting Irish universities' distinctive characteristics and attractiveness as a destination for Irish, EU and non-EU graduate students.
- as a portal providing information on graduate education programmes and funding opportunities available to potential students.
- a means of communicating the significant and rapid changes in Irish graduate education and the challenges and opportunities therein.
- a means of explaining the work and activities of the Fourth Level Ireland Network.

The Network continued to liaise with the Geary Institute on the modules of the Irish Universities Survey that will survey PhD students.

1.3.2. Activities for the next period

The Network will continue its planning for the 2009 Fourth Level Ireland Conference. The first Fourth Level Ireland Conference took place in conjunction with the IUQB in October 2008.

The Network Co-ordinator, IUA Director of Research and Network Chair will continue to represent the Network and the IUA on the HERG working group on Research Capacity. The working group will consider challenges to achieving SSTI research capacity targets.

The Network will undertake additional iterations of www.4thlevelireland.ie to develop a distinctive and effective role for the site. These iterations will reflect Network deliberations on how it can support the Network's activities and goals.

The Network will monitor the development of a European Science Forum on research integrity. The Health Research Board chairs the forum's working group on good practice guidelines.

The Network will maintain liaison with the Irish Universities' Survey in the promotion of participation of graduate students in the survey's second module, which will remain open during the summer.

The Network Co-ordinator will attend the EUA Council for Doctoral Education in Lausanne, in June. The event will explore potential collaborations on supervision, research careers, internationalisation and data collection.

1.4. European / International Funding

1.4.1. VP Research Visit to Brussels 25th / 26th May 2009

The VP / Deans of Research Group visited Brussels on the 25th / 26th May for a series of meetings focusing on European funding for research. The meetings were arranged by IUA

in collaboration with the Enterprise Ireland office in Brussels. The group received presentations from the European Research Council (B. Turner), European Institute of Technology (T. Sanders), Marie Curie Programme (B. Arano), European Research Area (J. Gavigan) and European Partnership for Researchers (M. Serpieri).

The group also held informal meetings with representatives from the Health Programme (S. Hogan), Marie Curie (G. Bingen), FP7 Policy (B. Hawdon) and the Irish Permanent Representation (R. McClean). The group met with G. Byrne-Nason (Irish Ambassador to EU) and discussed strategies to influence EU R&D policy through the Irish Permanent Representation and the Members of the European Parliament.

1.4.2. Seventh Framework Programme / IUA Marie Curie Office

During the period covered since the last IUA Review, the activities of the IUA Marie Curie Office concentrated mainly on awareness raising activities for the Marie Curie programme (especially for the Industry-Academia Partnerships and Pathways (IAPP) scheme and the Individual fellowships and Reintegration grants), as well as the ongoing provision of support for applicants and contractors.

The expertise of the National Contact Point continues to be appreciated both nationally and internationally, which is documented by various invitations as speaker at events related to mobility of researchers, Marie Curie Actions or more generally research careers:

- In February the NCP followed an invitation by the Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) and gave a presentation at the EREF-2009 satellite conference “Attracting Research Talent” in Ankara (EREF-2009 is the Annual Conference of the European Regional Economic Forum which this year is under the title “Developing Human Capital and Managing Migration for More Competitive European Regions”). The conference in Ankara was co-organised by TÜBİTAK, TuRBo-ppp (Turkish Research and Business Organisations – Public Private Partnership) and SBRA (Slovenian Business and Research Association). The NCP was also invited to contribute to the EREF-2009 preparatory workshop “Researchers’ New Route: Europe” which took place in conjunction with the conference.
- In early June the NCP will give a presentation to a group of Early Stage Marie Curie Fellows in Prague, in the framework of a CORTEX Training Course (CORTEX is an FP6 Marie Curie Early Stage Training Site).
- The NCP has also been invited to talk at the Annual Conference of the association “European Women in Mathematics” in Novi Sad (Serbia) in August, and to contribute to a Workshop on “Science careers and mobility” at the Euroscience Mediterranean Event 2009 in Athens in October.
- An invitation to chair a workshop on Marie Curie issues at the Annual Conference of the European Association of Research Managers and Administrators (EARMA) in Copenhagen in June had to be declined.

1.4.2(a) 'People' (Marie Curie) Programme – Participation and results

Since the last IUA Review a number of Marie Curie deadlines have taken place: proposals for the COFUND scheme had to be submitted by 19th February, while the deadline for the International Research Staff Exchange Scheme (IRSES) was on 27th March. The cut-off date for the European and the International Reintegration Grants (ERG, IRG) was on 2nd April.

Only one Irish proposal was submitted for COFUND, by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS). Preliminary results have been released and like their sister council IRCSET, the Humanities Council has also been evaluated very positively, so that – provided negotiations are successfully concluded – there will soon be IRCHSS/Marie Curie co-funded fellowships for researchers in the Humanities and Social Sciences wanting to spend a research period abroad. The fact that only one proposal was submitted is certainly related to the current economic situation. However, it is hoped that there will again be various proposals for the next deadline in February 2010, which could be submitted by other funding bodies, but also by consortia of institutions that want to set up a new mobility scheme (such as the CEMP fellowship scheme of the National Biophotonics and Imaging Platform Ireland (NBIPI) led by RCSI, which was successful in the first call for COFUND).

All three successful applicants for COFUND in 2008 (IRCSET, HRB and RCSI (on behalf of NBIPI)) have closed their first call for proposals and selected the first batch of fellows. The number of applicants has been lower than expected in all cases, which is probably at least partially due to the newness of the schemes and the need for increased awareness among eligible researchers. Applicant numbers are expected to increase for the next calls. The second call for the CEMP scheme (NBIPI) will close on 3rd June, while both IRCSET and HRB will launch the second call for their COFUNDed schemes later in the year.

Results for the IRSES call or the call for the Reintegration grants are not yet available but should be released soon. Irish participation in IRSES had been very low in 2008, but following an awareness campaign earlier this year a number of proposals have been submitted. Interest in the Reintegration Grants has once again been very limited, despite the high success rate of almost 90% in the last ERG call and close to 50% in the last IRG call.

1.4.2(b) 'People' (Marie Curie) Programme – Awareness raising activities and support

In early April the IUA (with sponsorship by Enterprise Ireland) organised a National Information Day on the Marie Curie Industry-Academia Partnerships and Pathways (IAPP) scheme at the TCD Science Gallery. A speaker from the European Commission (Louise Byrne) presented the rationale and rules of the IAPP scheme, followed by two presentations by successful applicants from 2008 (Prof. William Gallagher and Dr. Mairin

Rafferty from UCD on their project “Target-Melanoma” and Prof. Biswajit Basu from TCD on his project “NOTES”). In parallel sessions participants could then learn about support provided to applicants and contractors by Enterprise Ireland (travel grants, coordinator support), by the Irish Researcher Mobility Office (Euraxess) at the IUA, and by the Marie Curie Office, or listen to short presentations by potential applicants looking for partners to join their project consortia. The Info Day was very well attended, with more than 80 participants of which 13 from Irish industry. The event also attracted a number of international participants, from the Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) in Ankara and from TuRBo-ppp (Turkish Research and Business Organisations-Public Private Partnership) in Brussels.

In connection with the IAPP Info Day the IUA had produced a brochure with short descriptions of successful proposals from the 2008 call. Five of the six successful IAPP projects led by organisations from RoI plus one project led by Queens University Belfast (with partners from RoI) are featured in the brochure, which can be downloaded from the IUA website.

In order to alert as many potential applicants as possible to the upcoming deadlines for the IAPP scheme and the Individual fellowships and Reintegration grants, the Marie Curie Office in collaboration with the Research offices at the universities and a number of other organisations ran a large number of seminars on the various schemes. In total, 10 seminars were organised, at all seven Irish universities, at Waterford Institute of Technology, Dundalk Institute of Technology and at NovaUCD. In total some 300 researchers and support staff attended the seminars, had the opportunity to learn about the different schemes, and obtain immediate answers to their questions related to them. Many researchers expressed an interest in individual meetings with the NCP after the seminars or sent in further questions by email. Based on the strong feedback received, it can be expected that the number of applications for one of the upcoming deadlines will be quite a bit higher than in 2008.

The Marie Curie Office was also represented by stands at the conference “NUIM Connect 2009” at Carton House in early April and at the Research Career Fair at University of Limerick in May. A presentation was also contributed to the information and networking event “Favoriser les collaborations entre les entreprises et les universités par un financement européen.” organized by the Marie Curie National Contact Points for Belgium and Luxembourg in Brussels in April (presentation delivered by Catriona Ward from Enterprise Ireland).

The IUA Marie Curie Office is available for any questions regarding the above mentioned calls as well as any other issues related to the Marie Curie programme. We provide assistance in the preparation of proposals, including finding the right partners for a consortium (among others, availing of the large number of contacts in other countries that we have through the network of Marie Curie National Contact Points across Europe). We

can also provide help at the negotiation stage if needed. Presentations on specific parts of the programme can be arranged for specific groups or in the context of broader events, but should be requested a reasonable time in advance.

1.5. Euraxess Ireland (Irish Researcher Mobility Office) and Web Portal

1.5.1. Re-branding

To coincide with European Commission re-branding of ERA-MORE to EURAXESS Services Network, the researcher mobility office has now been re-launched as Euraxess Ireland. By creating a global brand name and visual identity for the European Researcher's Mobility Portal, the ERA-MORE network, the Charter & Code and ERA-Link, awareness amongst the main target groups, such as researchers, universities, research institutes, companies employing researchers, political authorities, etc. will be strengthened.

1.5.2. Portal

The national portal *Researchcareersireland.com* will shortly be re-launched as **Euraxessireland.ie**. J4B developers are currently re-designing the portal to incorporate consistency between the European EURAXESS site and all national sites. This is important in order to create a strong brand and unified message, thereby increasing visibility. Funding for this redevelopment is being provided by the Office of Science and Technology – DETE as part of its agreed budget for 2009.

1.5.3. Funding

Following negotiations with the IUA Research Director and the Euraxess Office Manager, the Office of Science and Technology (OST) agreed to increase their annual funding from €90,000 in 2008 to €108,000 for 2009. This enables the IUA to continue providing the mobility service and managing the Hosting Agreement Scheme. It also ensures availability of funding for developments and maintenance of the Hosting agreement extranet and the national portal.

1.5.4. Hosting Agreement Scheme and Extranet

The office has processed 598 Hosting Agreements to date with a total of 19 accredited organisations which includes one from Industry (LM Ericsson Ltd.). Hosting Agreements originate from 59 non-EEA countries – India (110), China (102), USA (73), Russia (31), Australia (24) and Canada (23). The most active organisations in employing non-EEA researchers are the following: UCD (113) NUIG (104), TCD (98) and UCC (88). 265 researchers have taken the advantage of immediate family unification under the scope of the Scheme.

1.5.5. Network Meeting

A network meeting was held on 25th February and all of the universities, and many of the IOT's and funding agencies, were represented. Key personnel from the Irish Naturalisation & Immigration Service (INIS) and Office of Science and Technology - DETE also participated. The main theme of the meeting was the Hosting Agreement scheme and operational considerations. The INIS presented an overview of the visa application process, residency permits and stamps.

In addition, the meeting presented the re-launch of ERA-MORE to EURAXESS Services Network. The researcher mobility office has now been re-named Euraxess Ireland and the portal is in development to incorporate the new identity.

1.5.6. Presentations

An overview of relevant Mobility support and services for Researchers was presented at the Erasmus Mundus II Information Day on 26th February and to the delegates of the Marie Curie IAPP Information Day on 7th April.

1.5.7. Statistics

Statistical analysis collated prior to the preparation of this report can be summarized as follows:

- 16,564 Job Searches on the portal – a remarkable increase on the last report.
 - 281 - Job Applications made directly via the portal application facility but this does not reflect the large number of applications that have been made directly to organisations
 - 2,628 - organisation profile searches have been made by registered users
- There are now 3,586 users registered on the portal.

1.5.8. Euraxess Annual Conference

Both the Euraxess Ireland Manager (Jennifer Cleary) and the Network Administrator (Magda Wislocka) attended the three day bi-annual conference in Potsdam, Germany from 16th–18th March. The theme of the conference was the *European Partnership for Researchers: a political frame for the EURAXESS initiatives*. Jennifer Cleary gave a presentation and was also rapporteur in a workshop on “The four pillars of the Partnership for Researchers- Enhancing the Training skills” and co-hosted an interactive session on the transnational collaboration ERAMIND project. M. Wislocka participated in delivering a parallel session on the MOREBRAIN project.

1.5.9. EU Projects

1.5.9.(a). ERA-MIND

The ERA-MIND - *European Research Area Mobile Researchers in Industry Project* was developed to improve the quality and coherence of EURAXESS Services to industry

organisations and researchers in industry. This is a collaborative project funded by the European Commission with partners from Netherlands, Italy and Turkey.

A project meeting took place during the three day EURAXESS Conference in Potsdam in March to discuss planning and progress of key activities and deliverables. The partners delivered an interactive information session on the project to the conference participants.

The first activity report was submitted in April highlighting IUA's achievements to date which includes the establishment of a network of Industry End users for the group and a mapping analysis of the needs and expectations of Industry. These are ongoing deliverables and will be updated over the course of the project.

A training session and co-ordination meeting is to be delivered at the next European Commission Training Event for the Euraxess Network in September, Thessaloniki.

1.5.9.(b) MOREBRAIN

This project is EU funded and consists of collaboration between IUA and partners in Spain, Israel and Iceland. The objective of the project is to investigate ways of linking to research diasporas. The 'push and pull' factors influencing researchers' mobility were identified on the basis of the literature review carried out by the Coordinator (Bar-Ilan University) and reference material from international reports in similar areas. A project workshop took place during the EURAXESS conference in Potsdam 16th-18th March 2009 where the partners delivered an interactive information session and mobility factors were discussed with the conference participants. The IUA has developed a questionnaire to investigate factors that influence a researcher's decision to pursue a career abroad and why they choose to return home. The questionnaire was discussed during a consortium meeting which took place in Reykjavik (Iceland) 25th-26th May. The next step is the preparation of an online version of the questionnaire to be implemented across the EURAXESS network, capturing responses from researchers in a wide variety of European countries. The next co-ordination meeting is planned for March 2010 in Israel.

1.6. Research Integrity

IUA initiated a project to deal at a sectoral level with the issue of Research Integrity. The term Research Integrity covers issues on misconduct in research including plagiarism, falsification of data and authorship. We do not have a national policy in place (only the HRB requires that its funded institutions have a policy). It was recognised that there should be an independent procedure in place to deal with this issue. The IUA is working with the RIA in preparing a half day conference on the issue of Research Integrity in September.

2. Strategic Innovation Fund

2.1. Presentation to HERG - 13th May 2009

The HEA are planning a review of all SIF projects that will be done from a strategic perspective. The intention is to generate greater synergy between projects with a view to reform and ensuring the maximum impact of each SIF project

At the HERG meeting on 13th May C. O'Carroll gave an overview of the IUA SIF projects focusing on those with a direct relation to research. A presentation was also made by N. Brennan (TCD) on the National Research Data project.

2.2. Irish Universities Study

The current situation is as follows:

- *Module 1*

The results from the Module 1 survey carried out in 2008 have been encapsulated in a number of reports that are in the stages of being finalised. These include reports on taught students (undergraduate and graduate), PhD students, international students and a report focusing on gender issues.

- *Module 2*

The survey on undergraduate and taught graduate students has now been completed with a response rate in excess of 5,000. The survey remains live for PhD students until the middle of the summer.

- *Researcher Survey*

The researcher survey is currently in the field and over 400 researchers in the seven universities have completed the questionnaire to date. We are targeting the entire population of 3,000.

2.3. Full Economic Cost Project

The detailed design and implementation phase of the FEC project funded under SIF Cycle II is well underway. Each of the university FEC Managers and the IUA central project manager have been meeting at three weekly intervals. The institutional projects that each of the FEC managers have been assigned have progressed significantly over the last few months with many already completed or nearing completion at this stage.

SAS consultants have been formally engaged as providers of the FEC software solutions and of IT and costing technical support and expertise. Over the last few months the IUA and SAS have been engaged in a project planning process and in the development of the FEC template model. Training has been provided to the FEC Managers on the operation of the SAS software.

The original project timeline provided for FEC data in respect of the initial pilot to be available by the end of June 2009. A number of issues have emerged however which is likely to impact on this timeline. SAS have been working with the FEC Managers in

relation to the development of the FEC template model. Significant progress has been made in this regard however a number of issues have arisen that required detailed consideration. A number of these have been resolved while unresolved matters are being escalated to UCFOG for discussion and decision. This had led to delays in project timelines. Following the development of the template model, SAS will assist universities in any local customization of the model that may be required.

In addition there have also been issues in relation to the collection of Academic Activity Profiling (AAP) data, a key input of FEC. AAP data collection was due to be rolled out across universities in early 2009 however as a result of the collapse of social partnership earlier in the year and other staff related issues the unions have recommended that their members would not engage or co-operate with the AAP collection for FEC purposes. In most institutions the collection of March and May AAP data has not taken place. This issue will continue to be monitored by the National Steering Group.

2.4. Strategic Planning & Decision Support Project

The final report of the project was presented to the IUA Strategy & Strategic Innovation (SSI) Group at their meeting on the 19th March 2009. At that meeting the SSI Group appointed a sub-group to review and revise the report taking into account issues and concerns raised by the SSI Group. The sub-group will report back to SSI and ultimately to IUA Council with a proposed final report.

2.5. Fourth Level Ireland Project

See section 1.3 above.

2.6. IUA Equity of Access Project: Update on Developments

2.6.1. Higher Education Access Route

The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) specifically targets students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Developments in HEAR 2009

- The multi-indicator model, together with the permutations, to be used to screen for eligibility was agreed and signed off by Registrars. These indicators are to be in place for a two year period.
- The HEAR process extended its catchment area to include the BMW region.
- While it was not possible, in the time available, to organise that all applications were processed centrally external experts in means testing and assessing were engaged. They assisted each HEI with the screening process and will furnish a report including recommendations on the overall screening process.
- The number of applicants for 2009 has increased to approximately 3,000 and the screening of same was completed by the close of May.
- Initial analysis shows that the new multi-indicator model worked extremely well as a means of identifying the target groups. However, the number

of eligible applicants is significantly down on last year. This is mainly because of absence of supporting documentation. It is felt by the Access Officers that totally withdrawing previously offered support and follow up on incomplete applications was the key reason for this. Early consideration would point to the importance of the Access Office focusing their attention on pre-entry work to support and encourage those applicants who have no family history of participation in third level or of the process involved in applying to college.

- IUA is still awaiting a response from the AG regarding any potential exposure to legal challenge on the grounds of positive discrimination.

2.6.2. *Supplementary Route for Students with Disabilities*

The function of the Supplementary Route for Students with Disabilities is twofold: (i) to gather information for use by the HEI, in conjunction with the student, to develop a support plan and (ii) to facilitate admission. The former is accessed by many HEIs while the latter has a more limited number of participating HEIs. This admissions route is now formally called DARE (Disability Access Route to Education). Developments in 2009:

- In-depth assessment criteria for eligibility were agreed. These are to be tried and test over a period of three years.
- The Operations Manual has been agreed and signed off.
- The administration and delivery of the scheme was divided by disability type among the HEI and the management of data was carried out centrally by UL. The processes and structures in place in 2009 gave rise to far tighter overall quality control and it also means more ready access to national data.
- The total number of applicants was approximately 3,000 of which 70% applied on-line. Screening for 2009 was complete at the close of May.
- Initial analysis of applications shows that the number of students with specific learning difficulties is still the largest group and that applicants with sensory disabilities are still very low in number.

2.6.3. *Developments common to both HEAR & DARE*

- The technical specification for system build for the on-line application 2010 schemes is complete and has been signed off by CAO. The CAO have begun work on the build and testing is due to take place late June.
- All the Colleges of Education will be participating in HEAR 2010. The constituent Colleges of TCD will be participating in DARE.

2.7. National Research Platform

The National Research Platform is in the process of being printed. The Executive Summary and Recommendations are set out below for information.

Executive Summary

The objective of this project is to investigate the feasibility of developing a national research platform to provide access to research expertise and opportunities on the island

of Ireland in both the public and private sectors. The National Research Platform will ensure that the message emerging from the island of Ireland is of strong research that is coherent, innovative and forward looking. This approach dovetails well with the government's objective to create "*The Innovation Island*".

The premise that knowledge generated through research is a critical resource is not new. However, it has gained wider attention among academics, policymakers and the general public of late as it has been given a more central role in national development strategies and economic renewal. It is not enough for government policies to focus solely on the generation of research and innovations. Another important factor affecting the impact of research is how information on the research and innovations is disseminated. The value of knowledge lies in its use by the research community, society and the business world. For research to have an impact, its output must be shared and easily accessible—whether through its publication, the development of new products, or the creation of policies.

The significant NDP investment underpinning the *Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation* (SSTI) from 2007-2013 will be central to economic recovery and building a sustainable enterprise base underpinned by productive innovation activity across the economy. The *Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal* affirms the Government's determination to realise this objective. The Smart Economy is about the utilisation of human capital - the knowledge, skills and creativity of people - and ability and effectiveness in translating ideas into valuable processes, products and services.

Effective implementation and monitoring of the SSTI and Smart economy will require concerted efforts to enhance knowledge transfer and the visibility and accessibility of the national research effort. This will require more effective identification and classification of the research being conducted in Irish higher education institutions and research establishments and more effective dissemination of the results of that research effort to a variety potential users, in Ireland and globally. The potential users include other researchers, research managers, research agencies, funding bodies, entrepreneurs, technology transfer organizations, inward investment and development agencies, government bodies and related agencies, business and industry, the media and society.

A number of separate resources of information regarding the research effort in Ireland exist, such as the Researcher Mobility Portal, 4th Level Ireland, and Higher Education Institutional websites. Other sectoral SIF Cycle I and II projects, such as the Open Access to Research Outputs and the National Research Data project, respectively, will provide access to research papers and important information on the performance of R&D publications and citations, which need to be promoted. Under the banner of the expertiseireland.com website considerable progress has been made in mining the research support systems of the higher education institutions and creating, in a single web-based location, profiles of knowledge experts. However, expertiseireland.com has been limited due to its focus, purely on university-industry interaction, and also by limitations on its

content and user interface. The portal represents the collaboration and commitment of the higher education and public sectors to the promotion of research from Ireland, as evidenced by daily uploads of information. The portal also represents an important national resource of data capable of feeding into initiatives such as benchmarking exercises, or bibliometric analysis. The value of expertiseireland.com has been affirmed by an international peer review process which resulted in the IUA securing funding from SIF for a project to provide open access to research papers of university researchers which would use expertiseireland.com as a national access point.

The opportunity to capitalise on the learning from the expertiseireland.com portal was identified, to build a more comprehensive platform, through which all knowledge being generated by the national research system, could be transferred. The IUA received funding under SIF Cycle II to conduct a needs analysis, with the full support of IUA Council. The National Research Platform will ensure that the message emerging from the island of Ireland is of strong research that is coherent, innovative and forward looking.

From the outset, it was recognised that this project would require extensive and intensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders for this project. The users and stakeholders were identified and user groups were set up, encompassing personnel from the following: Higher Education Sector Research and Technology Transfer Offices, Marine Institute, Teagasc, Molecular Medicine Ireland, Office of the Chief Scientific Advisor, IBEC, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, IDA, Forfás, Enterprise Ireland, HEA, SFI, American Chamber of Commerce, Pharmaceutical Ireland, Irish Medical Devices Association, Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association, Irish Software Association, ISME.

The groups identified the following objectives for a National Research Platform, which are ranked:

- Highlight the extent and quality of Ireland's research effort, and serve to attract the best researchers to Ireland.
- Promote the research expertise, capabilities and innovation of the higher education and public research sector in Ireland.
- Attract post graduate students to double the number of PhD students.
- Promote networking to make it easier for academics to set up interdisciplinary, inter-institutional and international research.
- Provide a platform to increase collaboration between industry and academia and in particular to allow development agency staff to facilitate such collaboration in key strategic areas.
- Increase the base of information on the national research effort available to IDA Ireland executives in their marketing of Ireland for high tech foreign direct investment.

- Explore and develop collaborative or contract opportunities that are of interest to industry and that may draw industry investment (direct or indirect).
- Provide a platform for industry users to address specific research and innovation needs.
- Promote the technology offers from the higher education and public research system and enhance the take up of licensing opportunities.
- Generate bi-lateral agreement between the research entity and the companies that generate research activities, develop technologies or design products.
- Provide Assessment/Benchmarking of research output to stakeholders.

The users and stakeholders were further divided into smaller focus groups based on expertise, brokerage, facts & figures, resources and funding with the objective of identifying the information required to meet the agreed objectives. The needs of the users and stakeholders are presented in Chapter 4 of the Report.

Based on the information requirements of the users and stakeholders there is much work to be performed at the local Higher Education Institutional level. Information on much of Ireland's research effort remains obscure and badly co-ordinated, either being subsumed into the strata of individual university websites, or spread across disparate and uncoordinated sites devoted to individual research projects. There is a proliferation of data sources existing side by side with patchiness and lack of consistency. The opportunity therefore exists to bring focus and order to the current situation and to create single web based locus through which the national research effort can be accessed and quantified in a structured and intelligible manner. The result will be a message of strong research that is coherent, innovative and forward looking.

The Higher Education Sector contains the largest pool of researchers and information on the research effort in Ireland. While all Higher Education Sector participants agreed to provide the information required by the users and stakeholders, there is a considerable amount of work to be performed in order to deliver this. Each objective for the National Research Platform is presented with an overview of the work to be performed to overcome deficiencies in information, the value added, and metrics to assess.

The results of this study provide compelling evidence for the creation of a National Research Platform, through which the extent and quality of Ireland's research effort and innovations should be disseminated to the community. It should be noted that the objective of this study was to assess the feasibility of a National Research Platform, but what has become apparent is the need for a National vision for effective, coherent and transparent knowledge dissemination to all sectors, involved in the creation, application and exploitation of knowledge.

The recommendations from the report are as follows:

Recommendation 1

Build the National Research Platform through which the extent and quality of Ireland's research effort can be showcased and promoted nationally and internationally.

Recommendation 2

Assign priority to linking all Research Information System relating to R&D in Higher Education and in publicly funded research institutions, and funding for such. These systems will deliver the information required to disseminate the extent and quality of Ireland's research effort.

Recommendation 3

The National Research Platform Definitions committee continue to review the list of definitions and achieve sectoral and national agreement on the definitions within a 6 month time frame.

Recommendation 4

Have the funding agencies and other revenue streams of R&D funding, mandate that all associated research outputs are tagged to each individual stream.

Recommendation 5

Provide an all island Funding Information Service containing comprehensible information on funding opportunities available to all researchers, regardless of sector in the island of Ireland. Consideration needs to be given to the possibility of having an e-grants system where funding submissions can be made to all agencies.

Recommendation 6

The management of a National Research Platform is overseen by 3 different groups namely:

- Operations group – day to day running of the National Research Platform
- Information group – user group for the information providers
- Strategic board of directors.

There must be a higher proportion of representation from the Higher Education and Publicly Funded Research Institutions. Other representations must include HEA, Industry, IDA Ireland, SFI, Enterprise Ireland, IBEC, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Within the National Research Platform there must be scalability to adapt to new needs of users and stakeholders and new emerging technologies or strategies in other countries.

Recommendation 7

The National Research Platform is used to promote “*The Innovation Island*” by SFI, IDA, EI and Tourism Ireland.

Recommendation 8

The functioning of the National Research Platform would be greatly enhanced by the formulation and implementation of a National Strategy for Knowledge Dissemination. The development and integration of that strategy into appropriate R&D strategies could usefully be undertaken at a high level such as the aegis of the Interdepartmental Committee for Science, Technology and Innovation, to ensure that knowledge dissemination is fully integrated with the vision for “*The Innovation Island*”, as expressed in other national innovation and research strategies.

Finally, the cost of building, implementing and maintaining a National Research Platform is presented together with a brief analysis of constraints to the National Research Platform and the risks of doing nothing.

The National Research Platform will aggregate, disseminate and promote the research expertise, capabilities, infrastructure, education, information and industry services in a structured and accessible format, and provide the ability for assessment and benchmarking of research outputs to stakeholders and users. This will ensure that the message from Ireland is of strong research that is coherent, innovative and forward looking. The research output information will be provided primarily by the Higher Education Institutions and Public Research Institutes, and the value of this knowledge will be found in its exploitation and application by the research community, society and the business world, for the benefit of society.

3. Funding

3.1. Recurrent Funding

3.1.1. Current Funding

The HEA has notified institutions of a number of further reductions in the original core grant allocations awarded to universities. A €8.5m reduction in overall recurrent funding was notified in February 2009 and a further €15.5m reduction was notified in May 2009. As a result of these reductions a cut of just under 0.5% in core grant allocations was applied to all universities. The balance of the reduction was applied against the funding available for grant in lieu of fees in 2009. This will have a cash flow impact on institutions in 2009 but will also impact on the amount available for core grant allocations in 2010 as grant in lieu of fees is the first top-slice to recurrent grant allocations. The HEA has accordingly cautioned institutions to ‘*expect a much reduced core allocation in 2010*’.

In addition to the reductions in recurrent funding reductions were also applied to SIF (€3.5m) and Research (€2m) funding in 2009.

A number of cost saving initiatives which universities are required to implement were also notified to universities over recent months including reduced travel and subsistence rates and a reduction in professional fees of 8%.

The DES and HEA appeared before ‘*The Special Group on Public Service Numbers & Expenditure Programmes*’ on 18th March 2009. We await the outcome of the work of the group.

3.1.2. Tuition Fee Increase Submission 2009/10

The 2009/10 tuition fee increase submission has been submitted to the HEA. An increase in the region of 2.86% will be required to cover the cost of known unavoidable cost increases.

3.2. Pension Issues

3.2.1. Proposed Transfer of University Pension Schemes

Significant progress has been made in relation to the proposed transfer of university pension schemes to the National Pensions Reserve Fund (NPRF). Two of the five schemes will be transferred in 2009 and the remaining schemes will transfer in early 2010.

Enabling legislation has been drafted and university representatives have been given the opportunity to review and input to the drafting. It is intended that the draft legislation will go to cabinet for approval within the coming weeks and that the legislation would be enacted before the summer recess.

Secondary legislation by means of a ‘transfer order’ will be required to give effect to the transfer of the individual pension schemes. The transfer order will provide for the following:-

- the date of effect;
- a detailed list of the instruments or provisions that contain the relevant pension scheme;

In order to facilitate the transfer process all universities have been requested by the HEA to submit for formal approval by the Authority at its July meeting details of all changes made to the schemes since 1997 and details of all documentation on which members can rely for entitlements under the schemes.

3.2.2. FRS 17 & University Financial Statements

The enactment of the pension legislation will provide a means for universities to resolve issues in relation to the application of FRS 17 in university consolidated financial statements.

3.2.3 University Model Pension Schemes

The IUA Pensions Working Group on the Model Scheme Finalisation has been meeting to resolve final outstanding issues with the model scheme. A meeting was held on 24th April 2009 at which representatives of the HEA attended. A number of outstanding issues were identified which required clarification from the DES and/or Department of Finance. The HEA agreed to raise the issues with the relevant government departments and clarification has subsequently been received in respect of a number of these issues. It is intended that all universities would submit their draft model schemes to the HEA for approval at the July Authority meeting.

3.3. Shared Services

An IUA Shared Services Working Group was established to consider the potential for shared service arrangements across the sector. The group was comprised of representatives from finance, HR and IT functions. The group produced a report in which it recommended a number of potential areas for shared service arrangements across the sector as well as identifying a number of challenges and barriers which need to be addressed and potential operational and governance structures for shared service arrangements.

3.4. Sectoral Procurement Initiatives

UCFOG is leading an initiative in relation to the development of a sectoral strategic procurement strategy and implementation plan with a view to maximise cost savings and efficiencies through sectoral procurement initiatives. A request for tender is being developed to engage external support in this regard.

3.5. Taxation Issues

The sector has continued to engage with the Revenue Commissioners in relation to PAYE issues. Despite a number of submissions, which have been led by UCC on behalf of the sector, Revenue have maintained their original position as set out in their letter of September 2006. A final response to Revenue outlining some further detail in respect of the issues and seeking further clarification in relation to the basis for the position adopted by Revenue has been drafted.

3.6. Local Authority Maintenance Grants

The payment of maintenance grants to students is currently administered by the university. This is both costly and administratively burdensome. It also results in dissatisfaction amongst students who have to endure lengthy queues to claim the grant which in turn raises questions of confidentiality & privacy.

The Department of Education & Science (DES) is in favour of amalgamating the payment of maintenance grants into one scheme which will then be administered by a newly established centralised body. It is envisaged that this body will make the payment of

grants directly to the students electronically, thus bypassing the need for Local Authorities (LA's) to print cheques for each student which are then distributed by the universities Fees and Grants Registry office. However the current lack of funding has resulted in the “stalling” of this initiative.

Several county councils now intend to press ahead with their own system of automating payments directly to students. A number of meetings have taken place between the relevant LA's and the DES on how best to move this process forward. The universities have expressed wholehearted support for the automation of student maintenance grants and in this regard have met with the LA's and the DES to discuss how best to practically implement a pilot programme in time for the start of the 2009 academic year. The IUA is currently working to ensure that all universities are part of this pilot scheme which, if it is a success, will hopefully be extended to all LA's and educational institutions.

4. Borrowing Framework

A revised Borrowing Framework has now been agreed between the HEA and UCFOG.

5. Charities Bill 2007

The Charities Bill was passed into legislation in February 2009.

6. National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

6.1. Placement of University Postgraduate Diplomas, Higher Diplomas, and minor, special purpose, and supplemental awards on the NFQ

Following the placement by each university in summer 2008 to NQAI regarding the placement of their Postgraduate Diplomas, Higher Diplomas, minor, special purpose and supplemental awards on the NFQ, a number of follow-up actions have been underway since early 2009:

- The NUI has submitted detailed listings to the NQAI, as already undertaken by the other universities, of awards resulting from programmes in the NUI Recognised Colleges, for placement on the National Framework of Qualifications following the same methodology as the other universities.
- The NQAI, with input from the IUA, has proposed a policy approach for the placement on the Framework of the former awards of the universities (legacy awards). This approach was discussed by IUA Registrars at their meeting of 23rd January 2009.
- In order to advance this process, senior NQAI staff have made preliminary contacts with the relevant officers from each university, in order to prepare for the implementation of this approach in each university. Meeting will take place over the summer to further this, and to provide the opportunity to move forward

regarding improved publication and dissemination of university awards on the NFQ, and matters arising in each university.

6.2. IUA / NQAI Framework Implementation Network

A joint Bologna Expert / Framework Implementation Network colloquium on “Supporting the Design of Discipline-Specific Learning Outcomes” took place on 6th February 2009 in Dublin, with speakers from the UK and Ireland building on the experience of the QAA subject benchmark statements and the EU Tuning of Educational Structures project. Case examples from Business studies, English, Music and Physics were presented. The presentations at this colloquium may be found on the FIN website <http://www.nfqnetwork.ie>

Further meetings of the joint IUA / NQAI Framework Implementation Network took place on 6th April and 25th May 2009, chaired by Prof. John Scattergood of TCD. A practitioner-focused publication, based on the work of the three working groups in this network, is being prepared and is expected to be made available in electronic format at the end of June 2009.

6.3. Referencing of Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

Ireland is currently undertaking the referencing of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). This exercise, which is being led by the NQAI supported by a steering committee, including an IUA representative (Director for Academic Affairs), as well as experts from the Finnish National Board of Education and the Flemish (Belgium) Ministry of Education and Training. Three meetings of the steering committee have taken place, and a workshop to consider the draft findings of this committee was held in Dublin on 20th April. The workshop formed part of the communication plan and provided an opportunity to disseminate information regarding EQF referencing to key national stakeholders, including those from professional bodies and from beyond the traditional education sector.

The referencing report will be published during the summer 2009.

7. Internationalisation

Following moves by the HEA in December 2008 to discuss strategic scenarios for increasing the recruitment of international students to Irish higher education, a second meeting of the HEA group was convened for 18th March 2009, at which IUA was represented by the CEO. The HEA circulated a revised draft terms of reference in advance

of the meeting, incorporating comments received from the various stakeholders (IUA, IoTI, DIT, Enterprise Ireland).

In parallel, at the request of IUA Registrars, the IUA convened a small group bringing together the international officers from each university to discuss the university's own strategic priorities and operational preferences regarding the recruitment of international students. This group, which met 3 times, has produced a draft paper to inform the IUA CEO and for discussion by IUA Registrars on 8 June 2009.

7.1. Erasmus Mundus

Please see section 1.3.1. above.

8. Garda Vetting

The universities have been trying to ascertain from the HSE the modalities and timelines for the transfer of Garda Vetting for Nursing students from the HSE to the Universities. This is in follow-up to a meeting on this topic in June 2008, at which a number of issues were identified for resolution.

9. Nursing & Midwifery

9.1 HSE Nursing and Midwifery Education Advisory Committee and associated subgroups

The HSE has put in place a Post-Registration Nursing and Midwifery Advisory Committee, on which the IUA is represented. The purpose of this committee is to oversee the implementation of the recommendations of the HSE report of Nursing and Midwifery Post-registration Education Review. Four sub-groups have also been established to support the work of this committee in the areas of education commissioning and quality review, finance, information management and professional and regulatory matters. The IUA has nominated university representatives to this committee and each of the sub-groups. These representatives have been asked to report on a regular basis.

9.2 Funding Issues

As reported previously the HSE has applied cuts to funding and student number intakes in respect of nursing and midwifery education provision. The IUA has been working to seek a reversal in the cutbacks but attempts to date have been unsuccessful.

The HEA made a proposal to the HSE in relation to the possibility of filling some of the reduced intake numbers with overseas fee paying students funded from the Saudi Arabian government. However the HSE did not feel that they could support the proposal and without the support of the HSE this is not a potential solution to the issue.

10. Language Commissioner

10.1. IUA responded on behalf of the universities with medical schools to a query by the Language Commissioner regarding the availability of the HPAT-Ireland test in the Irish language. HPAT-Ireland is the additional test for entry to undergraduate medical programmes, agreed in 2008 between the providers, HEA, DES and DoHC as part of the implementation of the Fottrell Report on medical education. Further correspondence has been received from the Language Commissioner, querying the arguments made by IUA, and a second response will be provided once additional information has been received from ACER, the providers of this test.

10.2. Graduate Education

Following extensive exchange with the HEA in response to the HEA's review of structured PhD programmes, on 6 April the IUA sent to the HEA an agreed IUA definition of a 'structured PhD programme', together with a contextual statement regarding such programmes.

11. Lifelong Learning, Upskilling

In response to the economic climate, the HEA has formed a small group to coordinate responses to increased demand for upskilling opportunities in higher education. The universities are represented on this group by F. von Pronzynski (DCU) and D. Redmond (NUIM), and by N. Costello and L. Purser (IUA). The group met for a second time on 5th May and will meet again on 2nd June.

The focus of the group is currently on developing a number of schemes, as follows:

1. A scheme financed by DETE for 1,500 part-time places, targeting those in unemployment with no previous HE experience, for Levels 6, 7 and possibly 8 undergraduate. It is expected that this scheme will be most suited to programmes offered through the IoT sector.
2. A scheme, with earmarked HEA funding, for 1,000 part-time places, targeting HE graduates at least six months on the live register, for conversion-type courses at Levels 8 and 9 (ie higher diplomas, postgraduate diplomas, or similar minor/special purpose awards). These would be additional places for new students (ie not for existing quotas of places) on new or existing conversion-style courses. The areas of entrepreneurship, energy, ICT, etc were mentioned. It is expected that part-time students on such courses would take c. 30 ECTS per year, although this would remain flexible. There would be encouragement within the call for placements, industry-linked project work, etc. I indicated to the HEA that a call for such a scheme would be likely to attract a number of proposals from the universities.
3. It is possible that a 3rd scheme may also emerge, depending on DETE funding and other support, to address the issue of those in precarious employment (eg shortened

working weeks), for whom “reverse internships” for upskilling within a HE/research setting could be planned.

The HEA has issued a call for scheme 1 and is preparing a call for scheme 2.

The HEA is extremely interested in hearing and discussing all ideas from universities related to possible upskilling initiatives (courses, placements, reverse internships, etc). The University of Limerick is presenting a scheme to be discussed at the next meeting (2nd June), and all other such initiatives are welcome and will be considered.

12. EUA

12.1. New Study on Masters Degrees Across Europe

A new EUA study was published in April 2009 giving a detailed overview of the development of Master degrees in Europe. Based on a wide-ranging survey of European students, universities (leaders and academics) and employers, the study specifically looks at how Master programmes in Europe have developed a decade after the Bologna process was launched.

As a result of Bologna, the overall degree structure of many European countries has been fundamentally changed with the implementation of three degree cycles (Bachelor, Master and Doctorate) that are defined in terms of learning outcomes and credit ranges. The results of the study show that a Bologna Master ‘template’ is developing across Europe albeit in three distinctive forms of course provision: taught Master with a strong professional development application; the research-intensive Master which functions as a pre-doctoral degree; and courses delivered to learners returning to education from the workplace. The publication is available at <http://www.eua.be/publications/>. DCU and DIT were included in the list of site visits made during the study project.

12.2. EUA Prague Declaration

In April 2009, following its bi-annual Convention held in Prague, EUA published the Prague Declaration containing a series of targeted messages to Europe’s politicians with proposals from universities to help combat the current economic and financial crisis. Based on the outcomes of the Convention, the Declaration also sets out a long-term agenda for European universities in the next decade identifying ‘10 paths to success’.

The Declaration was presented to the 46 education ministers attending the Bologna process Ministerial Summit at the end of April, and underlines the universities’ role as a driving force for economic recovery in Europe. However, it stresses that, for universities to play their full role in helping European economies out of recession, politicians must commit to major investment in higher education and research. “Europe cannot afford to run the risk of losing a generation of talented people or a serious decrease in research or innovation activity,” the Declaration underlines.

EUA urges “decision makers at the national and European level to emulate the major investment in higher education and research that characterises the US economic stimulus package” and which supports both high end research and students and families struggling to pay for higher education. EUA is calling for renewed efforts from governments to reach the Barcelona target of 3% (of GDP) investment in research and the 2% (of GDP) target for investment in higher education proposed by the European Commission. The Declaration recommends that European stimulus packages are needed to create real opportunities and incentives for young researchers; to tap unused potential through the implementation and financing of lifelong learning across Europe; and to upgrade universities’ facilities and campus infrastructure.

Looking ahead to the next decade, the Prague Declaration outlines 10 key success factors for European universities:

- widening opportunities for participation in, and successful completion of, higher education
- improving researcher careers
- providing relevant and innovative study programmes
- developing distinctive institutional research profiles
- reinforcing and implementing autonomy
- increasing and diversifying income
- enhancing quality and transparency
- promoting internationalisation
- increasing and improving the quality of mobility
- developing partnerships.

13. Bologna Process

On 28 and 29 April 2009, the Ministers responsible for higher education in the 46 countries of the Bologna Process met in Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, to establish the priorities for the European Higher Education Area until 2020. They highlighted in particular the importance of lifelong learning, widening access to higher education, and mobility. It was agreed that by 2020 at least 20% of those graduating in the European Higher Education Area should have had a study or training period abroad.

14. Communications / Events

14.1. Marketing the University Sector and IUA Services

14.1.1. New IUA Newsletter

The new IUA online newsletter was distributed on March 12th. This is a key tool of the IUA Communications Office to promote the universities generally and create awareness of IUA activities and events. Items included:

- Universities Can Contribute To Economic Recovery

- Large Uptake of Research Hosting Agreements
- University Heads Honour Retired NUI Galway President
- North South Postgraduate Scheme
- NAIRTL Grant Scheme Expands
- Job Adverts for Access Project Manager & Executive Assistant
- Marie Curie IAPP Info Day April 7th
- Three new publications were promoted

14.1.2. Marie Curie IAPP Event

An information day for the Marie Curie Industry Academia Partnerships Scheme was held in the TCD Science Gallery on 7th April. The event gave an overview of the IAPP Scheme, advice from successful applicants of the 2008 call as well as a Brokerage and Networking session. This session gave researchers the opportunity to present project ideas and look for project partners. Presentations and photos from the event can be found on the IUA website <http://www.iua.ie/marie-curie/events-and-training/IAPPApril7th09.html>. A brochure highlighting successful applicants was specially produced for the event.

14.1.3. IoTI Portal Naming Workshop

L. O’Sullivan was kindly invited to an IoTI Flexible learning Portal Naming workshop organised by Richard Thorn who has been seconded to IoTI. The workshop was held on 14th May and was facilitated by the brand development company JUMP. The purpose of the workshop was to tap into the knowledge and experience of the Portal Steering Group and IoTI staff in order to generate name options for the new brand/website. The day long workshop resulted in 1,400 names being generated and 15 name suggestions were short listed for further development. The workshop was very interesting and a great information gathering exercise/ learning tool for the IUA communications office.

14.2. Publications

14.2.1. IUA International Brochure online

The existing hard copy IUA international brochure, ‘The Irish University Experience’ has been updated and has been produced in electronic format at <http://www.i-studentadvisor.com/iua2/>

IUA also contributed to the production of “A Guide to Studying in Ireland” compiled by ISA Media. This is also an online brochure and can be viewed at <http://www.i-studentadvisor.com/studying-in-ireland.html>

14.3. Communications for SIF Projects

14.3.1 ‘Access’ Communications Working Group

The Access Communications Working Group continues to develop a communications plan for the roll out of the HEAR scheme for 2010 and for the re-launch of DARE (Disability Access Route to Education). A number of draft promotional materials have been produced and will be refined over the coming months. The Access Communications

Working Group took the decision that the only pre-summer communication on the scheme to Guidance Counsellors would be through an article in the Institute of Guidance Counsellors May “Guideline” Magazine.

It is envisaged that a website will be developed as part of the PR tool kit for the project. www.hear.ie will be maintained by IUA in year 1 of the project and will then be reviewed and its future decided at a later date.

The password protected project **extranet** site was launched in April. This site is maintained by IUA and is accessible by all project teams and senior university officers with a vested interest in the project.

A promotional brochure has been produced for HEAR 2010 and will be further refined in June. This brochure will give an overview of the scheme and will direct students and others towards the HEAR website. A longer guide may also be produced particularly for those actually applying to the scheme.

14.3.2. SIF Librarians Project - Progress

The deadline for tenders for the design, development and delivery of an open access portal for the IREL Open project was February 6th. The contract was awarded to Enovation <http://www.enovation.ie/>. IUA preferred designers Design House have been given the job of designing the overall look and feel of the website and will work closely with Enovation to ensure the portal is both aesthetically pleasing and user friendly. A portal naming workshop was held at the end of May and designs are currently being produced.

14.3.3. Press Articles

On Monday June 1st the Irish Times Opinion Section featured an article written by N. Costello about the benefits of research to Ireland.