IUA Review [05/4] for IUA Meetings
in UCC on 17th October, 2005.

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1.   Research

1.1   National Research Plan 2007-2014

The government is developing a National Research Plan that aims to double the number of high quality researchers in Irish academia and industry. This plan is to implement the recommendations in the report *Building Ireland's Knowledge Economy - the Irish Action Plan for Promoting Investment in R&D to 2010*. IUA played a central role in writing this report and making the recommendations.

The Chief Science Advisor (CSA) presented the original draft plan to the Cabinet Sub Committee chaired by An Taoiseach in June. The plan was approved in principle and the Cabinet Sub Committee requested that further details to justify the high levels of investment being proposed.   The process is now being overseen by Ned Costello who chairs the Interdepartmental Committee on Science and Technology (IDC).

IUA Executive have met with the HEA, CSA and IDC Chairman to discuss this plan on a number of occasions and to put the universities' point of view forward. Comments and suggestions have been taken into account in the ongoing development of the plan that is expected to be finalised by end year.

1.2.   Science Foundation Ireland

1.2.1.   Overheads Investment Plan

SFI have sent out a draft OIP for 2006 and this has been discussed by the VPDOR group. There are no major problems at present with the draft although issues may arise during the actual preparation of proposals.

1.2.2.   Award Management System

SFI have rolled out the electronic proposal submission system for the Research Frontiers Programme. Despite being previously tested on Investigator Programme grants it has created many problems for applicants to conform to the SFI requirements. This will need to be rectified before the full proposal submission.

1.2.3.   Director General

The DG of SFI, Bill Harris, has been appointed to a new position in the US. He will take up the position of Provost and VP for Academic Affairs at California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) in California and when he leaves SFI in July 2006.

1.3. ***Research Strategy –C.H.I.U Conference – "Building Research Careers – the Postdoctoral Experience"4th - 5th May 2005.***
This second in a series of conferences on research careers explored the role and status of the postdoctoral researcher, and the current strengths and weaknesses operating at the postdoctoral level. The conference was addressed by key national and international speakers (UK, Switzerland, Israel and European Commission). The overall conclusion of the conference is that establishing attractive researcher careers is a prerequisite to increasing the quality and quantity of research in Ireland, details in.

Announcement: continuing our series of conferences on research careers we are pleased to announce a joint IUA and IBEC conference on Universities and Industry Working to Double the Number of Researchers in Ireland. This will be held on 30th November in the Helix.
This is the first conference to face up to this national challenge to be organized jointly by the two key bodies, IBEC and IUA, who represent the companies and universities that actually do research. The starting point for the conference is the main recommendation of the Building Irelands Knowledge Economy report that Ireland doubles its number of researchers in academia and industry by 2014. The size of the challenge can be gauged from the fact that in Irish industry less than 10% of the researchers are PhD graduates. The conference will explore existing practice of university industry collaboration and how we can work better together to stimulate more industry R&D.

1.4 ***Work Permits and Visas for non EU Researchers***
In 2003, IUA, then IUA, made an agreement with the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment (DETE) that provided fast track work permits for non EU researchers coming to Irish universities. We have now secured a much broader agreement that gives access to the same fast track procedure for researchers coming to all public HE institutions (Institutes of Technology, RCSI etc), public research organisations

The Department of Justice launched a consultation document for a new Bill on Immigration. IUA has made a detailed submission and has worked with IBEC and IDA to ensure a common position with respect to researchers and their families.

1.5. ***European Research Policy***
1.5.1. ***Researchers Charter and Code of Conduct for Recruitment***
The European Commission, with the Steering Group on Mobility[1], has drawn up a charter for researchers and how they are recruited. This objective is to raise the career of researcher at a European level and have it considered like other professions.   IUA was engaged extensively

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[1] Irish delegates, Dr. Conor O'Carroll IUA and Bill Brandon, DETE

and intensively in this process through consultation with national stakeholders in the universities, government agencies and other representative organisations (IBEC etc). IUA played a lead role in the discussion of the Charter and its implementation at a recent UK Presidency conference (8-9 September).

1.6. *EU Sixth Framework Programme*
1.6.1. *Human Resources & Mobility Programme – Marie Curie*
Ireland has had a very poor performance to date in the Sixth Framework Programme. The one major exception to these poor results is the Marie Curie Programme which, to date, has attracted over €42m for Irish researchers. The programme is only 9% of the total FP6 "cake" but the income to Ireland is 31% of the total Irish drawdown to date. This is now €20m more than the IST programme with has 20% of the FP6 "cake". The IUA Research Office provides full support to researchers applying to this programme (in academia and industry).

- The Marie Curie Programme now accounts for the top two multinational FP6 contract values and eight out of nine top indigenous Irish companies,
- The European average share of funding for this programme is 3.7% while for Ireland it is 19.2%,
- To date, Marie Curie income enables academia and industry to attract over 220 high quality researchers from around the world to Ireland.
- For the remainder of this project there is €450m available with deadline concentrated in Jan 2006,
- IUA estimates that the €50m target for Ireland in Marie Curie for FP6 will be exceeded.

1.7 *EU Seventh Framework Programme*
1.7.1 *FP7 Proposal*
The Irish position paper has been published. While commenting on all areas the Irish position focuses on;

- o **Trans-national collaborative research** must remain as the core component of the Seventh Framework Programme.

- o Increased emphasis must be placed on developing **human resources** and making Europe a more attractive place for researchers to work in and to develop their careers.

- o It needs to be made more user-friendly and attractive to **industrial participation, especially by SME's.**

IUA was intensively involved in shaping this position and in particular ensuring the prominence of research careers within the Marie Curie (People) programme in the final proposal. At a

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European level IUA has been directly consulted by the Commission on the structure of the Marie Curie programme in FP7. Through this consultation we have ensured that research career development, schemes to support R&D in industry (especially SMEs) will be a strong feature of Marie Curie in FP7 (People programme).

1.7.2 *National Support Structure for FP7*

IUA is deeply concerned with the current national support structures for FP6. National performance in terms of research income is abysmal bar that for the Marie Curie Programme. Our effective national support means that this is now over 30% of the total Irish income for a programme that is only 9% of the total available FP6 budget. The DETE and Forfas have established a consultative group to recommend the support structure for researchers in FP7. We are making the point that the current system coordinated by Enterprise Ireland is not effective and should be scrapped.

1.8 *Irish Researcher Mobility Centre and Web Portal*

An annual review of thIS project, carried out by their external auditors, was submitted to the European Commission in August 2005 (the project reached the end of its first year on July 15th).

Presentations and training on the Researcher Mobility Service and researchcareersireland.com portal to most Universities have been completed. Presentations have also taken place throughout the industry sector with assistance from and collaboration with IBEC and the IDA. Since the commencement of the project, the mobility office has brought together representatives, specifically in the Research and Human Resources departments within the seven Irish universities with the aim of strengthening and developing expertise on all aspects of mobility. The network has since grown beyond the university sector to incorporate other research-active organisations, academia and industry and their representatives. This will continue to expand over the course of the project.

A Training Seminar was held in August for all Network members (including newer members from Institutes of Technology, Research Centres, IBEC, IDA and SFI) with a focus on Work Permits and Visas. This coincided with the six monthly Network meeting. Representatives from the Visa Section (Dept. Justice) and Work Permits Section (DETE) attended and participated in the discussions. This is the first time that officials from the Visa Office have met with these organisations. This has had the effect of Dept. of Justice officials understanding better the need to provide visas quickly, not just for researchers, but also their families. The next Network meeting will take place in December and will involve an information session to be decided by the network members.

A Newer improved Information leaflet for both incoming and outgoing researchers has been distributed to all the Network members.

Upcoming Developments

The Researcher Mobility Office Ireland portal **researchcareersireland.com** has been developed with co-funding from DETE ~ €25,000, year 1 of project. This is the key information instrument of the office with online comprehensive and up to date information. IUA have submitted a proposal requesting additional funding from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) to develop the recruitment function of the Irish portal and integrate the European Researcher Job Opportunities Editor **http://europa.eu.int/eracareers** with the researchcareersireland.com recruitment section. This would allow users to upload and remove vacancies as and when they arise and in turn feed into the European Job opportunities portal thus providing greater European and International visibility of Ireland's researcher vacancies.

A six monthly E-Newsletter is in development for network members which aims to keep members and colleagues up to date with developments in the researcher mobility area, upcoming events & training days, initiatives to promote the portal and much more.

Annual presentations to the universities will commence in November. This will include a joint presentation by the researcher mobility office and expertise Ireland.

ERA-MORE workshop on industry involvement
Ireland and the Netherlands are co-organising a workshop on industry involvement which will be held in October 2005 for members of the ERA-MORE network.

1.9.   *expertiseireland.com*
A copy of the expertiseireland.com Annual Report is circulated with the IUA Review.

2.   *OECD Report/University Reform*
2.1.   *Minister's Speech*
Minister Hanafin used the launch of the EUA Report on the "*Review of Quality Assurance in Irish Universities*" on 25th April, 2005 to make a comprehensive speech on "Implementing the OECD Report". In her speech she set her comments on policy issues arising from the OECD Report in the context of her views on the role of higher education. Issues covered in her speech included:-

- Legislation to bring IoTs under the HEA,
- Placing IRCSET and IRCHSS on a statutory footing,
- All alternative model to the National Council for Tertiary Education Research and Innovation proposed by OECD,
- Priorities for a national strategy for higher education
    - the need for increased participation and improved access,

- the need to encourage a greater flexibility of course offerings to meet diverse student population needs in a lifelong learning context,
- the need to promote the quality of teaching and learning,
- the need to increase PhD numbers,
- the need for effective technology transfer,
- the need to safeguard and re-enforce the many roles of higher education as a key driver of our economic development, in providing independent intellectual insights and in contributing to our broader social, human and cultural understanding.

Review of funding allocation model,

Programme approval/discipline balance,

Government agreement to the establishment of a competitive multi-annual Strategic Innovation Fund to commence in 2006 which would enable higher education institutes to
- incentivise and reward internal restructuring and rationalisation efforts
- provide for improved performance managements systems,
- meet staff training and support requirements associated with the reform structures and the implementation of new processes,
- implement improved management information systems,
- introduce teaching and learning reforms, including enhanced teaching methods, programme restructuring, modularisation and e-learning,
- support quality improvement initiatives aimed at excellence,
- promote access, transfer and progression and incentivise stronger inter-institutional collaboration in the development and delivery of programmes.

Physical Infrastructure and Human Resources,

Research with an emphasis on the PRTLI and challenge of ensuring the long term sustainability of our research infrastructure,

Overall funding and an acknowledgement that the OECD Report identified the need for a quantum leap in funding but a firm statement that the reintroduction of student fees was off her agenda,

Further consultations with HE interests.

2.2. IUA Initiative

IUA Council considered a draft document *"University Challenge Programme"* prepared by the executive as a proposal for increased investment in universities in order to deliver key reforms recommended by the OECD and the achievement of agreed national objectives. It was agreed that the draft document be used as a basis for informal discussion at the highest level with the HEA and DES.

Arising from these informal discussions the need to provide examples of collaborative and sectoral projects that could arise and be funded as part of the University Challenge Programme

was identified. A draft paper on collaborative projects was prepared and circulated to Council Members for views and comments.

Also arising out of informal discussions, the need to dove-tail proposals for additional investment for reform in universities with proposals from a national research plan became evident. To this end the University Challenge Programme was recast as a document entitled *Fourth Level Ireland.*

Following on from contacts at Ministerial level, a meeting with the Taoiseach and a number of key Ministers was organised for 14th July, 2005. The *Fourth Level Ireland* document was submitted to the Taoiseach for discussion at the meeting.

Arising from the meeting, IUA was requested to prepare a paper to clarify questions about costing/expenditure, relationship of proposal with the National Research Plan and the Strategic Innovation Fund. A template for costing reform proposals was agreed following a meeting of senior university officers and a revised paper was prepared for a Council meeting on 14th September, 2005. The Council was concerned about the basis being used for costing the National Research Plan and decided that a university-wide costed model for Fourth Level Ireland should be produced by IUA using costing information supplied by the universities. The results could be compared with cost inputs to the National Research Plan. IUA circulated the outcome of the exercise. A revised IUA paper for submission to the Taoiseach and Ministers prepared for the Council Meeting on 11th October 2005.

Also arising from meetings with Ministers, University Heads had been challenged to come up with proposals for private fundraising. Following discussions at Council and UCFOG meetings a document on tax reliefs has been finalised for submission to Government. Also, a proposal on 'private placements' as a means of raising funds has been circulated.

2.3.   Higher Education Reform
2.3.1. Role of ICT in the Reform Process

Recently universities have turned to Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems as a means of replacing existing management and administration computer systems. An Observatory on borderless education report ***"Implications of Enterprise Resource Planning Systems for Universities: An analysis of Benefits and Risks"*** explores the extent to which ERP is contributing to the reshaping of universities and how these solutions are being reshaped by institutions. The shortage of niche-specific ERP suppliers catering specifically for the higher education market, which means that many universities have no choice but to adopt a generic ERP solution, is furthermore examined. The paper is based on ongoing academic research on the reshaping of universities and the role of ICT within this process. Findings from research

conducted over a four-year period at a large UK university, a major software supplier and the associated higher education user group are included in the paper.

2.3.2. Organisational Change

A further Observatory report in June 2005 *"Organise to Optimise – organisational change & higher education"* addresses a number of fundamental questions including can higher education institutions as presently organised on the model of research universities efficiently deliver mass postsecondary education whilst ensuring student learning outcomes? Can this be done by institutions organised as loosely connected disciplinary silos designed for elite, in-residence students and faculty research? The authors argue no. Most colleges and universities are composed of disciplinary silos that poorly facilitate navigation across organisational boundaries to achieve core functions. Postsecondary institutions organised horizontally are better positioned to enhance student learning, but are optimised when they operate as organisms or complex adaptive systems. This report urges educators to explore how they might move towards organising postsecondary institutions as organic systems to maximise throughput and ensure quality outcomes.

3. Funding
3.1. Current Funding 2005/2006

The University Chief Finance Officers Group made a submission to the HEA in respect of the required increase in tuition fees for 2005/06 noting that the increase needed to cover the cost of known unavoidable cost increases was in the region of 7.6%. The Department of Education and Science subsequently agreed an increase in the undergraduate tuition fee of up to 7% for the academic year 2005/06 and an increase in the "student services charge" from €750 to €775.

3.2. Funding 2006

The issue of state recurrent and capital funding for 2006 is comprehended by the paper being prepared by IUA as a follow-up to the meeting with An Taoiseach and Ministers.

3.2.1. Private Placements

Following clear indications that the future capital funding requirements of the sector will not be fully met by Exchequer funding there are increasing pressures on universities to generate funds for capital developments. Arising from this it was agreed by IUA Council that IUA would examine the possibility of raising funds through the use of bonds or private placements. FTI Finance Ltd was engaged to prepare a paper outlining the issues for consideration.

Subsequently AIB/Deutsche Bank, following discussion with IUA Executive, submitted a proposal in respect of private placements. The views of Finance Officers were sought in respect of the possibility of utilising private placements as a means of raising finance and a summary of the feedback has been circulated. The private placements proposal has to be viewed in the context of the government's policy of using Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) to fund

infrastructure for the education sector. One basic question for universities is whether private placements would be more preferable than PPPs for universities. These papers were considered by IUA Council at its meeting on 11 October.

3.3. Capital Funding
3.3.1 Kelly Report
The Minister for Education and Science Mary Hanafin TD announced on 30th September, 2005 that she was allocating €255m for delivery of Third Level projects using the PPP model. Details of the third level projects and institutions concerned are to be announced in Oct/Nov.

3.3.2 Devolved Control and Accountability Procedures
A representative group of IUA Finance, Buildings and Procurement Officers met to consider the proposed *"Devolved Control and Accountability Procedures"* (DCAP) for capital projects. The procedures are aimed at speeding up approvals and avoiding the necessity of the Departments of Finance and Education and Science to examine individual spending programmes. An IUA response to the proposed guidelines was prepared and forwarded to the HEA.

The group subsequently met with officials from the HEA to discuss the response in further detail. It was agreed at the meeting that within the overarching framework of the DCAP, short specific documents be prepared setting out the principles and operational processes which would apply to different categories of project/programmes. Draft documents have been prepared by IUA and have recently been submitted to the HEA for consideration.

3.4. Funding Model
The HEA has been developing its proposals for a new funding model in the light of the views and recommendations of the OECD Report and feedback from the HEA seminar on the topic held in October 2004. The HEA made a presentation on developments at the Plenary meeting on 4th April, 2005, in NUIM and a final model has now been approved by the HEA. The HEA intends that the new funding model will be in place for 2006 grant allocations.

3.5. Pension Issues
3.5.1. Sectoral Approach
As agreed at the IUA Plenary meeting on 4 April 2005 a Working Group on Pensions was established to consider and address a number of pension related issues on a sectoral basis. The group, chaired by M. Gleeson, TCD, includes representatives of Chief Finance Officers, Secretaries, Vice-Presidents/Deans of Research and HR Officers. The three primary areas of focus for the group were as follows:-
1. Issues arising from the Fixed Term Work Act
2. Funding Issues/State guarantee
3. Issues in respect of the Revised Superannuation Arrangements (Model Scheme)

The group has concluded its initial work and has prepared a report for the IUA Plenary.

3.5.2. *Funding Issues*

Arising from the implementation of the EU IORP Directive and the resultant review of schemes currently exempted from the requirements of the funding standard IUA has written to the Department of Social & Family Affairs, the Department of Finance and the Department of Education & Science outlining the importance of university pension schemes remaining on any 'derogation list' from the standard. Correspondence was received from the Department of Finance indicating that the sectors concerns were being taken into account by the Department. Although a formal response to the request has yet to be received, informal indications are that university pension schemes are likely to remain on the list of bodies exempted from the requirements of the funding standard.

The Pensions Working Group has also raised the issue of funding pension schemes with the HEA. The HEA has met with the DES and Department of Finance in relation to these issues. We understand that the Department of Finance acknowledged the scale of the issues involved and has agreed to give these issues due consideration.

The HEA has also proposed that a working group comprising representatives of the HEA, Department of Education & Science, Department of Finance and IUA, be set up to consider how best to address the funding issues facing university pension schemes.

3.5.3. *Revised Superannuation Arrangements*

The Working Group on Pensions also considered the 'Model' Scheme, including the recent Department of Finance circulars on professional added years and cost neutral early retirement provisions. The Group has recommended that the terms of the model scheme, the professional added year's provisions and the cost neutral early retirement provisions should be accepted by universities.

The HEA has been advised by the Department of Finance that the Spouse & Children's Scheme may also need to be amended. The Group also recommends that this scheme should be accepted when finalised, provided the provisions are broadly similar to existing arrangements. The detailed recommendations of the Group have been set out in its report to the IUA Plenary.

3.6. *Fixed Term Work Act*

Following correspondence from SFI concerning the applicability of the Fixed Term Work Act to SFI funded researchers, arising from legal advice SFI had obtained, a group of finance officers, deans of research, and secretaries met with the Chair of IUA (now IUA President) to consider the sector's response. Arising from the meeting SFI was informed by letter indicating that IUA was dealing with this matter on behalf of the sector.

As noted at 3.4 above it was agreed that the IUA Working Group on Pensions would consider issues arising from the implementation of the Fixed Term Work Act and would make recommendations in respect of a sectoral approach to the implementation of the Act. Legal advice was obtained from IUA solicitors and pension consultants were asked to assist in preparing a case outlining the objective justification for the use of a defined contribution scheme for fixed-term employees. The detailed recommendations of the group, together with relevant supporting documentation has been included in the report of the group to the IUA Plenary.

3.7. *Tax Relief Schemes*

The Minister for Finance, Mr. Brian Cowen TD has launched a public consultation process on tax incentive reliefs and exemptions. IUA in consultation with PriceWaterhouse Coopers, has made a submission on behalf of the sector to the Minister in respect of the *Relief for Rented Residential Accommodation for Third Level Students* (Section 50) and *Relief for Investment in Third Level Educational Buildings* (Section 843).

In addition IUA was invited by Indecon Consultants, who are undertaking a review of property based reliefs on behalf of the Minister for Finance, to make a submission in respect of these schemes. Detailed questionnaires were also sent to universities by Indecon seeking information in respect of these schemes. A representative group from IUA met with Indecon on 17 June 2005 to give the sectors views and opinions of current schemes and to make recommendations going forward.

Arising from the meeting of university heads with An Taoiseach and other Ministers it was agreed that IUA would forward to the Minister for Finance recommendations in respect of the development of tax relief mechanisms for the funding of capital projects.

Following detailed IUA submissions and consultations with the DES in respect of their draft *'Revised Guidelines on Residential Developments for Third Level Students'*, DES have reconsidered their approach and have issued clarifications in respect of certain matters rather than revised guidelines.

3.8. *Nursing – Transfer of Midwifery and Nursing Education to Third Level*

On review of the proposal to transfer midwifery and nursing education to third level, as negotiated between IUA and Department of Health & Children officials, An Tánaiste and Minister for Health, Mary Harney TD expressed dissatisfaction with a number of aspects of the deal. Correspondence received from the DoHC indicated that –

'The Tánaiste is concerned at the scale of the additional costs identified for the implementation of the midwifery and integrated children's/general nursing degree programmes, having regard

to the significant infrastructural and other resources already in place in the Higher Education Institutes to support undergraduate nursing education'.

Arising from her dissatisfaction with the scale of capital costs involved and following indications from the Institutes of Technology that they could facilitate students at no capital cost the negotiations were reopened and IoT's were invited to enter the process.

An IUA and an IoT representative were invited to a meeting with DoHC officials on 5 October 2005 to address the concerns raised and agree a strategy for moving forward. The following points were noted:-

- The transfer of post-graduate courses for the academic year 2006/07 was 'off the table'.
- Dundalk Institute of Technology would be getting 20 places linked to Drogheda Hospital, TCD would get 10 places in the Rotunda to compensate
- A 'call' has gone to the IoT sector to see if any other IoT's would be interested in getting involved
- Fee and capital equipment costs have been agreed but capital infrastructure costs would require massive reductions
- Revised capital costings are to be submitted to the DoHC before14 October 2005

4. HEA

4.1. Code of Practice for the Governance of Third Level Institutions
The Secretaries Group met with representatives of the HEA and DES on 23 June 2005 to discuss the sector's response to the Draft Code of Practice for the Governance of Third Level Institutions and the proposal to extend the remit of the Ethics in Public Office Act to the Third Level Sector. Arising from the meeting the Chair of the University Secretaries Group wrote to the HEA outlining the sectors concerns in respect of the Ethics in Public Office Act.

4.2. PRTLI Issues
Audits of projects funded under PRTLI cycle 1 are due to commence shortly. IUA wrote to the HEA in April 2005 requesting the HEA to appoint a single audit firm to audit all projects under cycle 1. This would enable cost efficiencies to be achieved and would also ensure that audits could be undertaken in an efficient, timely and consistent manner. Following subsequent discussions the HEA noted that they believed that it would not be appropriate for them to appoint such an auditor and that this was a matter for the universities. It is intended that IUA will seek tenders for the appointment of an appropriate audit firm.

IUA also requested payment of the additional grants provided to fund the legal and financial consultancy costs associated with the implementation of Section 843 tax based funding

arrangements and to meet shortfalls arising from a lower than anticipated tax relief rate. The HEA stated that they were still in consultation with the DES in respect of this.

4.3.   *Staff Statistics*
The HEA had raised concerns in relation to the perceived increase in staff numbers within the sector since 31 December 2002. IUA had argued that such increases need to be considered in the context of new programmes introduced over the period, particularly Nursing and Therapies, increases in student numbers and necessary increases to meet compliance and other requirements such as internal audit, freedom of information, equality etc. In addition a significant proportion of the increase was due to funded or self-financed activities. Accordingly a submission was made to the HEA, which identified the actual change in 'core funded' staff over the period. Following the IUA submission the HEA wrote to the DES on 14 April 2005 accounting for the increased staff numbers.

4.4.   *National Digital Research Centre*
Following an independent assessment process two consortia were invited in July 2005 by the HEA on behalf of the Department of Communication, Marine and National Resources to make full proposals to establish and manage the new National Digital Research Centre. The two consortia each involve a number of universities.

4.5.   *Irish American Higher Education Research Organisation (IA HERO)*
The first colloquium organised by IA HERO was held from 21st to 23rd September, 2005. The objective of the colloquium was to enhance the understanding of participants from the US and Ireland in regard to selected key issues and challenges facing higher education systems in meeting the public interest. The colloquium was attended by Dr von Prondzynski DCU, Dr Hegarty TCD, Prof J Walsh and Dr D Redmond NUIM, and M McGrath IUA.

4.6.   *Follow-up Agreement to Sustaining Progress*
The HEA, at the request of DES, shoudht proposals from the universities for an agenda of change and modernisation to be tabled by the public sector employer's side as part of the negotiations on the next national pay agreement. Response from the universities' Human Resource Officers were co-ordinated by IUA and forwarded to the HEA.

5.   *Access*
The Registrars invited, at her request, Dr Mary-Liz Trant, Head of the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education (within the HEA) to their meeting of 4 April. Four priority action points were discussed:

- How best to evaluate existing access programmes for under represented groups in higher education

- Development of comprehensive access policies and targets within institutions
- Collection of data on participation in higher education by under represented groups
- Linking financial resources to quantitative and qualitative indicators of progress

The Registrars indicated concern at the absence of any response from the Department of Education & Science to the IUA proposal to widen access by creating an extra 5% of places in all disciplines which would be reserved for "access" students.

A joint follow-up meeting was held on 9 May between Jim Browne (NUIG), Áine Hyland (UCC), Michael McGrath, Lewis Purser with DES and the National Access Office in order to explore current operational difficulties regarding the various access programmes and data related to these. A draft set of questions has been developed by IUA and the HEA for use within each university in order to improve information on these issues – these questions are now being discussed by the access officers. DES has likewise requested detailed breakdowns from the Local Authorities and VECs regarding grants disbursed by these groups. Partial information has been received by DES and is currently being collated before being presented to IUA and the HEA. IUA responded to a DES request for comments regarding the future administration of student support.

At the National Office advisory group meetings on 31 May and 6 September, attended by Áine Hyland (UCC) and Lewis Purser (IUA) for the Universities, the HEA announced details of an evaluation of access programmes in all HEA-funded institutions. The evaluation will take place during the first half of the academic year 05-06 and is being undertaken by Cynthia Deane, on consultancy to the HEA. This evaluation will cover all existing access programmes and will be based on a self-evaluation exercise within each institution.

The University access officers have in parallel requested an evaluation of the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) scheme, in which all universities (except NUIG) and the DIT allocate a number of ex-quota places to CAO applicants from designated schools who do not gain the required number of CAO points. The IUA Registrars' group has agreed in principle to this evaluation. It is expected that the HEAR evaluation will be covered by the wider HEA evaluation, however the Access officers have been requested to prepare terms of reference for the HEAR exercise in order to ensure that their points of concern are covered.

6.   *International Students/Services*
6.1.   *Sectoral Action*
At the request of the Registrars, the university international officers produced a paper in April entitled "Suggestions for Collaboration between Irish Universities in International Education", outlining a number of operational areas where it was considered that closer cooperation, both

national and international, could be achieved. The international officers stressed that this was a preliminary document and each suggestion would need greater discussion.

This paper was taken up at a special meeting of the Registrars on 6 May, extending the field to include some of the strategic issues involved in increased internationalisation of Irish higher education and educational services. An outline proposal was prepared for the IUA Council regarding the need in principle to increase the levels of coordinated activity in this area. This principle was accepted by the Heads and the international officers were then asked to prepare a more detailed proposal concentrating on a small number of short-medium term activities where progress could realistically be made. A paper was received at the start of October 2005 and was discussed by Registrars at their meeting on 17 October.

6.2. Education Ireland Conference

International Education Board Ireland (IEBI) organised an Education Ireland conference on 16-17 May, with the support of DES and Enterprise Ireland. The conference discussed the report on the Interdepartmental working group of November 2004 on the "Internationalisation of Irish Education Services", including the creation of Education Ireland as a new statutory body by merging the current IEBI and the Advisory Council for English Language Schools (ACELS). EI expects to coordinate national policy development in the field, prepare strategic plans, commission market research, promote the EI brand, award a Quality mark, develop a code of conduct for the pastoral care of international students, operate the English as Foreign Language (EFL) sector, liaise with the awarding bodies, Fáilte Ireland and Enterprise Ireland.

Prof. Ferdinand von Prondzynski (President, IUA) gave a keynote address outlining some of the universities' interests and concerns regarding greater internationalisation. Given that the universities currently attract 61% of international HE students in Ireland and earn 75% of tuition income for the non-EU students (IEBI statistics, 2004), it is clear that IUA can and should take a lead in developing policy and action regarding the ongoing internationalisation of Irish higher education. IUA will meet DES in order to press forward with these actions.

7. International Developments

7.1. Bologna Process

7.1.1. Bologna Promotion

Following his appointment as Chief Executive of IUQB, Dr. Padraig Walsh has been replaced by Dr. Norma Ryan, UCC Director of Quality Promotion, on the national team of Bologna Promoters. Dr. John O'Brien (UL) continues in this role.

A HEA/NQAI Bologna Information seminar took place in Dublin on 15 June. This was the first in a series of Information Sessions to be organised under the Bologna promotion initiative of the EU Socrates-Erasmus programme. The focus of this information session was on learning

outcomes in the context of developments in the European Framework of Qualifications and drawing from the experience of the Tuning projects. Documents and presentations can be found on the HEA website http://www.hea.ie.

7.1.2. *Bergen Ministerial Conference*

The Ministers of all Bologna Process countries met in Bergen, Norway, on 19-20 May to review progress and plan the next phase. A stocktaking report was presented, in which Ireland is one of 10 countries with overall excellent progress across the various action lines. The report showed that more action in Ireland is required on implementing the Diploma supplement and on student involvement in quality assurance. No new action lines were proposed in Bergen. It was agreed to concentrate on implementation of previously agreed actions. Ministers agreed that, by 2007, the following action lines would be fully implemented:

- Two cycle degree system
- Recognition of degrees and periods of study
- Quality Assurance Processes

and that progress would have started regarding the:

- Implementation of the standards and guidelines, as proposed in ENQA report;
- Implementation of National Framework for Qualifications;
- Awarding and recognition of joint degrees, including at the doctorate level;
- Creation of flexible learning paths, including recognition of prior learning.

Ongoing developments regarding a European Framework for Qualifications show that the vision for this is compatible with Ireland's National framework for qualifications. The NQAI has been closely involved in European work since the 2003 Ministers meeting. The recent ENQA document on Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area was presented and fully accepted by Ministers. The principles included in current Irish legislation are also present in the ENQA report. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine were admitted as new countries to the Process, bringing the total number of participating countries to 45.

Ministers also agreed on the following additional priorities:

- Quality assurance – Ministers requested ENQA to undertake further work on a 'European Register' of QA agencies;
- Lisbon Recognition Convention – for all countries to move from the ratification stage to the implementation stage
- National action plans to improve the quality of the process associated with the recognition of foreign qualifications;

- EUA was asked by Ministers to undertake work on the further development of the basic principles for doctoral programmes,
- The lack of comparable data on mobility of students and staff, as well as on the social and economic situation of students in participating countries was noted, and it was agreed that work would be undertaken in this area before 2007.

The next stocktaking exercise will concentrate in more detail on the following issues:
- Formal engagement with employer organisations, in order to communicate the process of reforms
- A Working Group will be set up to look at issues associated with equitable access, and what useful benchmarks can be developed to measure action in this area
- National action plans will be requested in order to improve recognition processes
- Support measures for new members of the Bologna Process.

In addition, EUA will be undertaking a Trends V survey and study during 2006-2007, to be presented at the next Ministerial Conference (London 2007). Irish universities will once again be covered in this survey, both through their responses to questionnaires and through selected site visits.

For full information and updates on the Bologna Process, please see www.bologna-bergen2005.no and www.bologna.ie, the recently launched Irish Bologna Process website. A new website has also been launched by the UK who will host the next Ministerial conference in 2007: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna/

7.2. EUA
7.2.1. EUA Glasgow Declaration
On 15 April 2005, meeting in a special session, the EUA Council adopted the "Glasgow Declaration.". Drawing on the findings of TRENDS IV and on discussions during the Glasgow Convention, the Declaration provided the basis for the message that the EUA President, Professor Georg Winckler, presented to Ministers of Education meeting in Bergen on 19 May 2005. The Glasgow Declaration also sets the policy agenda for the higher education community in the years to come.

The Declaration underlines universities' commitment to pushing forward reforms, and the importance of developing differentiated missions and profiles to address responsibly the challenges of global competition and social cohesion. Governments are called upon to give European universities the autonomy they need, be it legal, administrative or financial, to allow them to implement reforms, while universities recognise the importance of improving governance and strengthening leadership at all levels.

For the first time, EUA addresses the crucial topic of funding, stating clearly that adequate funding is a prerequisite for securing universities' future, and, with it, their capacity for promoting cultural, social and technological innovation. The Declaration emphasises that Europe cannot hope to compete with education systems in other parts of the world if higher education and research budgets are not viewed as an investment in the future and urgently increased.

7.2.2. Bergen Meeting

EUA President, Professor Georg Winckler, addressed European Higher Education Ministers at the Bergen ministerial meeting, setting out the position of the Association. Based on the Glasgow Declaration and the Trends IV study on the implementation of Bologna reforms at institutional level, the EUA statement underlines four priorities for the future:

- Providing greater autonomy for universities to support them in their efforts to implement the Bologna reforms.
- Reinforcing the European dimension, in particular by enhancing quality through reinforcing cooperation and specifically by establishing the European Register for quality assurance agencies as indicated in the Communiqué.
- Increasing urgently higher education and research budgets without which Europe cannot compete with other regions of the world.
- Linking the Bologna Process to the needs and challenges of the emerging knowledge society and the Lisbon agenda.

These issues were taken up by Ministers and reflected in the Bergen Communiqué.

7.2.3. Trends IV publication

The final version of the Trends IV report was published in May 2005. The authors, Sybille Reichert and Christian Tauch, in an analysis of the results of visits to sixty-two Institutions, set out the challenges faced by European higher education institutions in implementing the Bologna reforms at the mid-term point to 2010. The report's findings relate specifically to the mid-terms priorities of the 2003 Berlin Communiqué, namely degree structures, recognition and quality, as well as to the link between teaching and research, particularly in relation to doctoral programmes, that was added as a new Bologna Action Line in 2003. Trends IV both provides a snapshot of the current state of play in all these areas while also drawing conclusions and outlining the challenges ahead at institutional, national and European level.

Presented for the first time to the participants of the EUA Convention of Higher Education Institutions in Glasgow in April 2005, Trends IV brings a university perspective into the Bologna stocktaking exercise. The report's findings also fed into the Bergen Communiqué. The full report can be downloaded from www.eua.be

8. *National Framework of Qualifications*

8.1. *Co-operation with NQAI*

Cooperation between the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) and IUA has intensified during 2005, given the increasing awareness within the university sector of the far reaching implications of the National Framework of Qualifications and the desire expressed by the IUA Registrars' Group for the universities to be active guardians of the integrity of this framework. IUA has prepared a publication entitled "The Universities and the National Framework of Qualifications", for widespread dissemination within each university and across the higher education sector.

8.2. *Placement of awards within the Framework*

Discussions are ongoing between the universities and the NQAI regarding the placing in the Framework of minor, supplemental and special purpose awards made by the universities. Discussions have likewise started regarding the placement of professional and practitioner Doctorates in the Framework. The NQAI has also begun consultations with the universities and other stakeholders regarding the placing of awards made by professional bodies.

8.3. *Recognition of Prior Learning*

The NQAI has published, following consultation with the universities and other stakeholders, "Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training". Discussions have now begun regarding implementation of these principles, in order to encourage progress towards national objectives regarding lifelong learning and a knowledge society.

8.4. *Access, Transfer and Progression*

The NQAI has a statutory role regarding the promotion of access, transfer and progression across the higher education system. A study is currently under way, jointly commissioned by NQAI, the HEA and IUA, on transfer and progression routes for holders of FETAC or equivalent awards, HETAC or NCEA awards and UK vocational education and training awards into undergraduate programmes leading to university Honours Bachelor Degree awards. The purpose of the study is to provide insights into enhancing the transfer and progression routes, in the context of the roles and missions of the various institutions providing programmes leading to these awards and the transfer and progression arrangements that these institutions have in place themselves. The report is due in October 2005. NQAI has made provision for an evaluation of transfer and progression procedures and practices in the universities during the period 2006-2008.

8.5. *Review of HETAC*

The NQAI likewise has a statutory oversight role regarding HETAC and FETAC and may from time to time review the performance by the Awards Councils of their functions. NQAI has decided to review HETAC, with the review process starting later this year or early next year,

and has approached IUA together with other stakeholders to help establish the framework for this.

9.   *Quality Assurance*
9.1.   *EUA review of QA procedures.*
The EUA Review Reports were launched by the Minister for Education and Science in government buildings on 25 April 2005.

The IUQB, having anticipated the EUA recommendations and as proposed in its Strategic Plan (2004-2006) established a task force to draw-up a plan to collaborate with the universities in implementing the recommendations contained in the university and the sectoral reports. The task force formulated its approach for monitoring the implementation of the recommendations contained within the EUA review reports. This approach was incorporated as part of the IUQB response to the HEA as detailed below.

In March 2005, the IUQB was invited by the HEA to draw up an action-orientated implementation plan in respect to the findings of the EUA sectoral report and the report of the High Level Reference Panel. This plan was submitted to the HEA on 17 June 2005. The IUQB was also invited by the HEA to provide a six-monthly update report on progress and development in this area. This report is scheduled to be submitted to the HEA on 25 October 2005, (6 months after the launch of the report by the Minister).

The plan sent to the HEA on 17 June 2005 indicated:
- That the IUQB had established a task force on the EUA *Review of Quality Assurance in Irish Universities.*
- That this task force would produce a composite recommendations document in relation to the findings and recommendations in the EUA sectoral report. An outline for the document was included.
- The key stages for monitoring process with actions

Following the June meetings of the IUQB task force, the following proposal was sent to the chief officers and registrars of the 7 Irish universities on 16 June 2005.

- In relation to the individual university reports
  - IUQB requested that each university appoint its own working group to oversee the implementation of the recommendations contained within the EUA university report and to monitor progress with the actions outlined in the response and proposed that each university provide IUQB with a six-month update on progress with the implementation of the recommendations in the EUA report on their own university, as outlined in the response sent to IUQB in April 2005

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- In relation to the sectoral reports
  - At university level
    - requested that universities provide IUQB with a six-month update on progress with the implementation of the recommendations in the sectoral report
  - At sectoral level, IUQB highlighted
    - recommendations in relation to Strategic Management and Governance for attention of senior management of universities
    - proposals in relation to the implementation of findings in relation to teaching, learning and research
    - recommendations in relation to operational quality assurance matters
    - recommendations being addressed by IUQB sectoral projects

As a follow-up to the letter of June 16 from IUQB to the chief officers and registrars of the universities, the IUA Quality Officers group was charged with preparing a sectoral response to the recommendations in the EUA Sectoral report. Following a meeting of the Quality Officers and the IUQB secretariat on the 25 August last, a draft of the sectoral response to the recommendations in the sectoral report was made available. The draft document will be considered for adoption at the IUQSC meeting on 17 October in UCC.

A concluding seminar on the *Review of Quality Assurance in Irish Universities* was held in the Davenport Hotel on the 6 September 2005 in Dublin, jointly hosted by HEA and IUQB. It was attended by over 70 representatives of university senior management, government departments, higher education stakeholders including elected student representatives) and by 7 members of the original EUA review teams.

The conference considered the composite recommendations document referred to in the action-oriented implementation plan submitted to the HEA. The conference broke out into 3 workshops covering the areas of:
- Quality review processes
- Research and Innovation
- Teaching, Learning and Internationalisation

Details on the conference and the notes from the workshops were made available on the IUQB website. High-quality publications were also produced for the conference of the EUA sectoral report and the individual university reports.

The IUQB task force met on 12 September to consider the outcome of the seminar on 6 September. The IUQB then wrote to the respective Chairs of the IUA Registrars and Vice-President/Deans of Research Groups requesting that the appropriate IUA Groups consider the

findings of the EUA sectoral report in relation to teaching, learning and internationalisation and in relation to research at their next scheduled meeting.

9.2. IUQB
9.2.1. Board Meeting
The seventh meeting of the Board took place on 23 May 2005 in the IUA Boardroom.
- The new CEO, Dr Pádraig Walsh was introduced to the Board by the Chairman.
- The Board was updated with progress on the legal status and future funding of IUQB.
- The Board considered proposals for and agreed to a restructuring which would increase the number of members of the Board from 14 and 17 and would allow for nominees of the HEA and NQAI to serve on the new Board.
- The Board established a task force, as agreed in the IUQB strategic plan, which would oversee the implementation of the recommendations in the university and Sectoral reports.
- The Board was briefed on international matters, in particular the ENQA Standards and Guidelines document, the EUA Glasgow declaration, the National Report (Ireland) on the Bologna process and the Bergen declaration.
- A date was set, 4-5 October 2005 for the next meeting of the Board.

The eighth meeting of the Board took place on 5 October 2005 in the IUQB Boardroom.
- The Board was updated with progress on the legal status and future funding of IUQB.
- The Board considered and approved nominations for the new Board. A nominations committee was set up to consider further nominations to the Board.
- The Board considered updates from the work of the IUQB task force with regard to implementing the EUA Review recommendations.
- It was announced that the fourth annual IUQB conference would take place in DCU in May 2006.
- In view of the restructuring of the Board no date was agreed for the next meeting but it was proposed that the first meeting of the new Board take place in February 2006.

9.2.2. Sectoral Projects
The sectoral proposal to the HEA for QA funding that was submitted in May 2005 requested funding for two projects entitled *Student Evaluation and Feedback Mechanisms in Quality Assurance'* and '*Promoting Student Engagement in Learning'*. The submission also requested additional funding for the two sectoral projects approved in 2004 which were under-funded at that time: *'Institutional Research'* and *'Academic Workloads'*. In addition, the proposal included a request for funding for project management support, for a research support and communications officer, for publication of IUQB Conference Proceedings, for the IUQB/HEA Taskforce and bi-annual reporting to the HEA and for the production of a newsletter on quality

assurance developments that will inform the sector and the wider public. The request was for a total of €142,000 to fund these projects up to December 2005.

9.3. *Irish Higher Education Quality Network*

A meeting of the IHEQN was held on 8 June 2005 in the offices of Griffith College Dublin. The secretary informed the network that the website IHEQN website was almost ready to be launched. The website address will be www.iheqn.ie. The operational principles document was approved by the network and it was agreed that it would be place on the website but that the document would not, as yet, be published in hardcopy format.

ENQA Report: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area: The Network was informed that the above document, produced in association with ENQA, EUA, EURASHE and ESIB has been adopted by the Ministers for Higher Education at the meeting in Bergen in May 2005. The network met again on 18 October 2005 in the offices of USI.

10. *Copyright*

Following discussions between its representatives and those of the Irish Copyright Licensing Agency (ICLA), the Joint Working Group on Copyright approved revised terms and conditions on which ICLA licences for educational copying would issue to the institutions represented by the Working Group. It has also approved amendments to the text of the licence which had been sought in the light of legal advice of comments by the IUA Secretaries' Group, and of discussion within the Working Group itself.

Universities were informed on 20th May, 2005 that the Joint Working Group had come to an agreement with the Irish Copyright Licencing Agency [ICLA] and that the agreement was being recommended to the institutions. The Chair of the Group, Dr. Sean Phillips, UCD, provided an advice note which set out the background to and the details of the agreement with the ICLA. The advice note together with a revised Education Licence Agreement negotiated with ICLA was circulated to institutions represented by the Joint Working Group. On foot of the agreement the ICLA invited institutions to obtain licences.

Briefly, Institutions that obtain a licence on the terms agreed will be authorised to make on-print multiple copies for educational use at the rate of €3.90 (plus VAT) per fte student in 2004/05; on payment of the same fee for 2005/06 they will also be able to make digital copies of Irish copyright materials for closed internet websites on virtual learning environments.

A number of universities have also recently been approached by Newspaper Licensing Ireland Limited requesting payment of an annual fee for a licence for copyright to enable universities to photocopy or scan newspaper information, to distribute it to others and to store it electronically.

IUA wrote to the Chair of National Newspapers of Ireland in response to such a request noting the mutually beneficial relationship which exists between the newspaper industry and the universities and requesting an exemption from the requirement to obtain a licence.

11. E-learning

11.1. Ireland/UK Cooperation

The HEA announced on 10th October, 2005 that higher education funding agencies in Ireland and the UK had joined forces to further the development of e learning. HEA and the UK's Joint Information Services Committee signed a memorandum of cooperation which would boost the development of the recently established National Digital Repository – a shared initiative between universities and the Institutes of Technology.

11.2. Virtual Learning Environments

The Observatory on borderless education issued a report in May 2005 entitled *"Virtual Learning Environments: Practitioner Perspectives on Good Practice"*. This report positions the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) as one of a long series of initiatives in e-learning and electronic business. The authors argue that whilst VLEs have value-added potential, they also represent a high risk strategy for universities. This report draws on the authors' some fifteen years of practical experience in developing VLE-type environments, as well as classic frameworks from 'Strategic Information Systems' theory. It is argued that given the declining enthusiasm for spending on technology-supported learning, there may be a growing trend among institutions to invest in other aspects of learning infrastructures. (e.g. physical buildings and information resources) rather than IT-based technologies alone.

11.3. Virtual Universities

A further August 2005 Observatory report *"Three 'Controversial' Virtual Universities: Lessons from the Australian Experience"* analyses three cases of virtual universities which attempted to operate in Australia: The University of Asia, St Clements University (South Australia) and Greenwich University (Territory of Norfolk Island). Providing an incisive historical account of each entity, the report outlines the confusion and conflict that occurred when Australia, a legislatively fragmented nation, attempted to regulate their activity using existing accreditation arrangements. The resulting dialogue eventually spawned new national standards for accreditation in Australia, namely the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes (2000). The author concludes that the profiled cases were necessary for the evolution of the higher education sector and its regulation, but costly experiments for the individuals concerned. This report will help policymakers worldwide reflect on the most productive ways to regulate virtual universities.

12. IUA Issues

12.1. New Office

The move to the new office took place on 1st July, 2005.

12.2 Name Change

The change of name from Conference of Heads of Irish Universities to Irish Universities Association and attendant changes to the Articles and Memorandum of Association were approved by the Companies Office with effect from 5th August, 2005. A resolution necessary to exclude the term 'Limited' from the title was passed at the first IUA AGM on 14th September 2005 and has been forwarded to the Companies Office for approval. The change to Irish Universities Association was officially launched at a reception in the new offices on 19th October, 2005.

12.3. Staff Changes

Ms Julie Sugrue resigned from the position as Executive Assistant at the end of August and has been replaced by Ms Louise Bruton from 7th October, 2005. Ms Lia O'Sullivan has been engaged on an IUA Communications pilot project.

12.4. Approved Body for the Scheme of Tax Relief for Donations under Section 848

On 3 May 2005 IUA was approved by the Revenue Commissioners as an approved body for the Scheme of Tax Relief for Donations to Eligible Charities and other Approved Bodies under Section 848A Taxes Consolidation Act 1997.

Under this scheme IUA may claim repayment of tax in respect of donations made by taxpayers who pay tax under the PAYE system. In addition donors who pay tax under the self-assessment system are entitled to claim relief on donations paid.