

**C.H.I.U. Review [03/4] for C.H.I.U. Meetings
On 20th October, 2003 in University College Dublin**

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1. Research

1.1 *Research Overheads*

The overheads report was published in August and has been distributed to key personnel in all the universities. It is also available on the HEA website at www.heai.ie

While the report was accepted unanimously by the Inter Departmental Committee chaired by An Tánaiste there have been no moves to date to actually implement the recommendations.

1.2 *European Research Area/Irish Presidency 2004*

1.2.1. *Researcher Careers*

Following the communication launched by the Commission during the Florence Presidency Conference, there will soon be a Council of Ministers resolution on this issue. It will highlight the following issues:

- developing a framework for recording and recognising different professional achievements throughout the career of researchers including those proposed within the context of the “Bologna Process”, such as the European credit transfer system;
- exchanging good practice as regards the evaluation and appraisal systems for careers in R&D;
- exchanging good practice as regards recruitment methods of researchers;
- guaranteeing adequate funding for doctoral candidates, including social benefits such as maternity leaves and taking the necessary steps to enable the portability of national loans and grants in the context of enhanced mobility for researchers;
- continuing efforts to remove administrative obstacles to a career in research or to mobility

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

Three working groups have been established by the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment to develop and action plan for Ireland. The Group, chaired by C. O’Carroll, has been looking at the 3% Target from the perspective of public investment in R&D. During a recent meeting of the Inter Departmental Committee consisting of senior civil servants from all government departments the central role of the universities in helping Ireland achieve the Barcelona Target was recognised.

1.3. *Science Foundation Ireland*

There was a high level meeting between The VPDOR group and SFI on 22nd September in C.H.I.U.. The points discussed were:

General Issues on SFI funding

- SFI are highly dissatisfied with the space allocated to some of their funded researchers and considering not giving grants without a space commitment

- SFI believe that lab space is becoming a major issue and are considering option of building their own labs

Overheads

- have asked Deloitte & Touche to carry out an audit focusing on the use of overheads
- believe that "landlord expenses" (rent, refurbishment) should come from overheads although this goes against the recommendations of the Research Overheads Report. Will directly fund space such as clean rooms etc (i.e. specialist space dedicated to project)

Centres for Science Engineering and Technology 2003 (CSET2003)

- have arranged for 3 CSET site visits in October
- SFI believes that if a CSET proposal reaches the stage of site visit then must be of very high quality - the lead researchers should come back with Investigator proposals that would not require further peer review

Basic Research Grants

- Basic Research Grants now transferred to SFI
- Original SFI idea was new frontiers; this makes the Basics the perfect scheme for SFI as it is the clear intention of SFI is to maintain the wide remit of the Basics
- Propose a new 2 stage process with a pre-proposal of 5 pages, reviewed by disciplinary panels
- Those that pass this stage will be invited to make a full proposal which will be subject to a very detailed and rigorous peer review (mail review plus panel)
- SFI will have the EI fund for the basics. In addition, SFI will fund **all** the ICT/Bio
- All projects have the 30% overhead additionally funded by SFI
- Have worked with C.H.I.U. through the VPDOR group to develop the Call for Proposals

Research Professorships

- SFI do not understand the low take up of this scheme
- C.H.I.U. pointed out that major problems are the embedding of the people after SFI funding, not easy to allocate unfilled chairs in specific departments, threat to existing faculty
- Agreed with SFI to put out joint general advertisements in the international scientific journals for research professors

Electronic Journal Access

- SFI would like to reactivate this proposal to have national access to journals (electronic with one paper copy).
- SFI willing to part fund but only if HEA give core support

1.4. Research Councils

1.4.1. IRCHSS

There has been a general revision of the Terms and Conditions governing all of the Council's grants. For example, applicants will be required to submit to the IRCHSS a written statement that full consideration has been given to the ethical implications of the proposed research. Where an applicant's research proposal requires approval by the Ethics Committee of the relevant institution, written evidence of such ethical approval

must be received by the IRCHSS in the event of a successful outcome to this application prior to confirmation of the award.

Professor Wim Blockmans, Professor of Medieval History and Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University of Leiden, has agreed to direct the evaluation of IRCHSS.

1.4.2. IRCSET

Basic Research Grants Scheme 2004

It seems that IRCSET does not have any involvement with the Basic Research Grants Scheme 2004.

1.5. Enterprise Ireland

1.5.1. Intellectual Property/Technology Transfer/Commercialisation

Agreement has been reached with Enterprise Ireland for a Patent Fund that will support Ireland's Third Level institutions for protecting, developing and marketing potential of commercially viable discoveries. The Patent Fund is a pilot programme to run until commitments totaling €1,000,000 are made. The process consists of two stages; the first is a feasibility grant of up to €5000 for valuing and developing a discovery within the first 2 years following the inventor's discovery report to the institution. The second stage covers patent funding and EI will cover 75% of the commercialisation costs up to a ceiling of €50,000. Discussions on the patent fund have been ongoing since early this year and have been led by the C.H.I.U. Group appointed by C.H.I.U. Council in December 2002. Both the VP/Deans Research and Industrial Liaison Officer Groups have been fully involved in the development of this proposal. The scheme will be launched in November.

The group will next move to the issue of the resourcing of the university Technology Transfer offices.

1.5.2. European Young Investigators Award (EURYI)

This is essentially postdoctoral mobility fellowship scheme allowing researchers worldwide to move to Europe. The scheme is operated by EUROHORCS a European Organisation of Research Councils. The EURYI scheme is based on contributions made by the Members, i.e. the constituent Research Councils. Enterprise Ireland is the Irish member and will be making a contribution to the scheme. It will be a 2 stage process where proposals for Ireland are evaluated by Enterprise Ireland; successful proposals will then be forwarded to the European Science Foundation (ESF) where the proposals from all participating countries will be assessed. **Note that Enterprise Ireland has included the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) along with their usual research areas.** This means that researchers abroad will now be able to apply for a EURYI grant to carry out research on HSS in Ireland. Full details will be placed on the EI website, <http://www.enterprise-ireland.com/services-details.asp?section=industry&subsection=industry-support&id=27>.

1.6. All Island Research Portal – Expertise Ireland

Dr. Celia Gallagher has been appointed as manager for Expertiseireland and took up her position in August. The current status of the portal is as follows: there are four universities who have placed staff expertise data on the portal DCU (338), UCD (253), NUI Maynooth (74) and QUB (44). UCC will have a presence by end of October with University of Ulster and University of Limerick by mid November. NUI-Galway has experienced problems with computer viruses and must postpone their presence until

January 2004. The Portal will have a European launch during the Irish Presidency early next year.

1.7. *EU Sixth Framework Programme*

1.7.1. *Human Resources & Mobility Programme*

There is currently a significant level of interest in the Marie Curie Schemes at a national, strategic level due to the suitability of the schemes to Irish applicants and the potential benefits to Ireland in terms of increasing R&D spend. Evaluation results from the Marie Curie schemes with closure dates in 2003 are currently being released. Initial indications show that some schemes were oversubscribed, resulting in low overall success rates. That said, the success rate for Intra-European fellowships was approximately 25%. Ireland's percentage participation (of 16.3%) in successful proposals in the Research Training Networks scheme is the highest of all countries participating. The National Delegate, Dr. O'Carroll and the National Contact Point, Siobhan Harkin continue to provide advice and training to applicants to the schemes, including the promotion of industry-academia collaborations in this regard.

There have been high level meetings with the IDA in order to promote the programme to their client companies. The Office has been working with various industry associations through IBEC (including Irish BioIndustries, Irish Medical Devices Association and Textiles) to encourage more Irish companies to participate as single applicants and in partnership with Irish universities.

1.7.2. *European Network of Mobility Centres*

This initiative in the Human Resource and Mobility (Marie Curie) programme has the specific objective of removing obstacles to the mobility of researchers, to encourage more abundant and more mobile human resources in Europe and to enhance the EU's attractiveness for research talent from all over the world through the setting up of a European network of mobility centres. It aims at offering researchers and their families, whether incoming or outgoing, comprehensive and up-to-date information and personalised assistance in all matters relating to their professional and daily lives.

The Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment has given responsibility to C.H.I.U. to set up a dedicated support service in Ireland with the objective of providing advice to researchers coming into the country under the EC's HRM programme. C.H.I.U. has recently submitted its proposal ("CAIRDE") to the European Commission for financial support for this initiative, which will consist of a dedicated central office in C.H.I.U. and a distributed network of experts throughout the universities.

1.8. *Marine Institute/Third Level Liaison Sector Group*

The Marine Institute (M.I.) has proposed the establishment of a **Third Level Liaison Sector Group** to provide a platform for structured exchange of views on issues related to marine RTDI. Informal discussions between C.H.I.U. and M.I. on this proposal have been held to assess the next steps in structuring such a group.

2. Funding

2.1. Tuition Fees

2.2.1. Tuition Fees 2003/04: On 25th July 2003, DES/HEA eventually conveyed their agreement to a 6.5% increase in tuition fees excluding any increase in the student services charge (effectively this results in an increase in fee income of only 5.5%.) There is a clear need at this stage to drop the term 'student services charge' which was visited on universities after the introduction of the free tuition fees scheme. Any original basis there might have been for the contrived relationship between the 'charge' and student services has lost all relevance with the Minister's ploy to use an increase in the charge to offset a reduction in the core funding for universities in 2002.

2.2.2. Tuition Fees 2004/05: The USI has started a campaign against a proposal to double the amount of the charge. They claim to have learned of the proposal from a high ranking DES official. According to the media, DES would neither confirm nor deny that such an increase was being proposed. The media also reported on a suggestion made by the HEA Chairman that payment of fees by students for the fourth year of degree courses might be considered.

2.2. Recurrent Funding 2003

It is expected that, as a consequence of measures taken to reduce expenditure in 2003, together with the additional HEA funding allocation in late 2002 that most universities will report a breakeven situation at 30th September 2003. At a meeting with the HEA on 8th October, UCFOG were advised that it was unlikely that any further additional funding would be received in 2003. Furthermore the HEA estimated that current funding earmarked by DES to meet benchmarking awards is €3m short and the funding/cost implications of implementing employee legislation [see Section 2.8 below] have not yet been determined pending availability of guidelines from the Department of Finance.

2.3. Recurrent Funding 2004

The funding outlook for 2004 is decidedly bleak according to clear indications given to C.H.I.U. representatives at a meeting with DES/HEA on 11th September 2003. The Education Budget will be under severe strain to meet the costs of the Benchmarking awards. It seems certain that spending cuts are in prospect for all areas of education which, for universities, are likely to be more severe than those experienced in the current year.

One of the key issues for 2004 will be funding for benchmarking and other pay awards. The HEA stated on 8th October that there was insufficient information available at present to estimate the 2004 grant although it was indicated that a shortfall would arise on funding required to enable the universities to fund costs at 2003 levels. It was also mooted that DES might advise that the 2004 grant would take account of benchmarking awards. UCFOG has estimated that cost increases in 2004 would be in the region of 11% if pay awards were factored in. The increase in 2003/04 fee income (effectively 5.5%), would mean that an increase in state grant of 14.8% would be required to breakeven. Clearly this is not feasible and UCFOG emphasised to the HEA that separate allocations would have to be made to fund benchmarking.

In seeking to make the case for university 2004 recurrent funding, the HEA requested details of specific measures taken across the sector which demonstrated the impact of the cutbacks in 2003 and which would be exacerbated if further funding constraints were

imposed in 2004. Although the HEA understood the implications of the cutbacks in terms of provision of courses and services, staff:student ratios, teaching equipment etc. and acknowledged the sensitivity of publicising aspects which might raise questions about the quality of university programmes, they considered that The Minister for Education and Science and his Officials would not be convinced by any case made in such general terms. The HEA also considered that it was very unlikely that backlog maintenance grants would be reinstated in 2004.

2.4. HEA Recurrent Funding Model Review

The HEA has been undertaking a review of the current funding allocation arrangements and commissioned a report on international models. A consultation paper will be drawn up shortly for consideration by UCFOG.

2.5. PRTL I and Priority Capital Projects

On 18th August, 2003 the HEA wrote to the University Heads informing them that funding for therapies and certain other priority projects was being deferred pending the outcome of the capital review and/or the publication of the Estimates for 2004 and that the position of PRTL I Cycle 3 remained unchanged. In response C.H.I.U. Chair sought a meeting with DES officials which took place on 11th September, 2003. The meeting was attended by the relevant Assistant General Secretaries, Secretary/CEO of the HEA, C.H.I.U. Council members, a UCFOG member and C.H.I.U. Director.

DES officials said that the budgetary situation set the context of any consideration of capital funding provision for education and in this regard the outlook for the 2004 Estimates was very bleak. DES gave no comfort in relation to the immediate availability of funding for capital projects. They accepted and understood the arguments in favour of lifting of the PRTL I funding pause and said that the situation was still in play but that any development would have to be in the context of budgetary/Estimates realities. The officials said that they and the Minister had been constantly pressing for a solution at the highest levels in Government. They acknowledged as helpful C.H.I.U.'s contribution to recent media articles and features on the importance of the PRTL I programme as a vital part of the government strategy to invest in R&D as a key driver of future economic development.

DES officials acknowledged in the case of therapies capital projects that the universities had responded to government priorities and that as well as the need to meet commitments or obligations to students there were sound strategic planning and economic reasons for proceeding with the projects. While they recognised that the circumstances for therapies projects were different to those of other priority capital projects, it was highly unlikely that they could be dealt with outside of the 2004 Estimates process. C.H.I.U. argued strongly that the Government must meet its funding commitments to PRTL I projects and therapy projects that it had approved.

It was reported on 2nd October that the Taoiseach had been advised by The Atlantic Philanthropies that €50m of funding promised to the sector would not be forthcoming unless matching state funds were provided. The Chairman ICT Ireland/General Manager of Intel wrote to the Taoiseach on 2nd September, 2003 urging the government to fund PRTL I Cycle 3.

The Capital Funding Review Group is currently in the process of meeting delegations from each university to review capital priorities.

A Section 50 submission to the Minister for Finance is to be made shortly seeking an amendment to facilitate student accommodation projects in progress at 31st December 2004.

2.6. *University Funding Paper*

C.H.I.U. Council considered the latest draft of the FGS paper on university funding at its meetings in August and September. At the later meeting, a communications strategy and action plan on university funding drawn up by Drury Communications was considered. The Council decided that the FGS paper should be finalised with a view to its release to the media at the C.H.I.U. meeting in October.

2.7. *Shortfall on ESF Undergraduate Skills Programmes*

There has been a downturn in student numbers enrolling in skills courses and in many cases student numbers have been well below the quota numbers agreed with the HEA. Infrastructure put in place for teaching and course provision was based on quota/steady state numbers. However, HEA funding is allocated on per capita enrolment. As a result there is a widening gap between the per student cost of providing the programme and the per capita funding. This is more starkly evident particularly in three of the universities. Funding is being now sought for what is hoped is a temporary fall in demand for the courses so that the infrastructure can be maintained. A submission is being prepared for the HEA which could be seeking funding of approximately €5m.

2.8. *Pensions Issues*

A Working Group has been established composed of the following groups: Finance, Secretary and HR together with Mr. A. Broxson (Irish Pensions Trust). Two meetings were held to consider a wide range of pertinent pensions issues on 31st July and 18th September 2003. The key issues are as follows:

- **Universities Act Section 25 (7) – Universities Superannuation Scheme** In accordance with the provisions of the Act, Mercer Human Resource Consulting prepared a draft superannuation scheme for consideration by the universities. Once agreed, it is intended that this will be submitted to the HEA/DES seeking finalisation. There are implications for example, for arrangements for added years where these vary across the sector. However the primary issue relates to funding.
- **Funding of pension schemes:** Adoption of the above scheme has significant funding implications particularly the need for clarity as to who is responsible ultimately for pension liabilities. The matter has increased in profile since the issue of FRS 17, the accounting standard dealing with pension costs. In order to report on pensions, the issue of responsibility must be addressed. The universities have been advised that they would need to either receive a guarantee from the State or direct funding to enable them to meet liabilities themselves. This is a matter of major significance for the entire public sector and HEA/DES have not indicated their position.
- **Funding pension aspects of new legislation: Protection of Employees (Part-time Workers) Act 2001 and Fixed Term Workers Act 2003:** Clarification is still being sought on how this legislation is to be implemented and it is not yet possible to quantify the potential funding implications.

- **Sectoral issues for funded pension schemes:** In the context of pension funding challenges being experienced by the universities, potential options involving major changes in the pension schemes, which would require Ministerial approval and careful consideration in the context of the University system and of the public sector, include the following: raising of the normal retirement age (at least for future entrants); reducing the “free added year” benefit (although any increase in the retirement age would lead to a reduced demand for this benefit); increasing the employer contribution to the Pension Fund or making lump sum transfers to the Pension Fund; changing the pension transfer arrangements to a “cash transfer” system (difficult to do unilaterally because of its impact of competitiveness in the recruitment market); limit the impact of post-retirement increases to the level of, for example, the general rate of inflation (for new entrants).

2.9. Nursing

The ‘pause’ in capital funding for therapies has had a direct impact on integrated building projects which were planned for nursing and therapies. The universities are working to meet their commitment to the Department of Health and Children [DoHC] for provision of nursing schools and the DoHC is continuing to honour commitments to capital funding. However there are serious practical implications for integrated facilities where funding is only available for nursing.

C.H.I.U. representatives met with the DoHC on 5th September to discuss recurrent funding levels for 2003/04 together with recurrent funding arrears for 2002/03. It was agreed that C.H.I.U. and DoHC would liaise prior to finalisation of funding levels. However on 3rd October universities were advised by the Department that recurrent funding for 2003/04 will increase by 6.5%. The Department had met with DES and appears to be more focused on bringing the mechanics of funding allocations in line with DES arrangements. DoHC did not engage with the substance of the funding profile provided by C.H.I.U. C.H.I.U. has advised DoHC that this level of increase will not meet cost increases forecast for 2004, in particular pay increases from benchmarking and is to write to the DoHC setting out the above C.H.I.U. position.

2.10. Taxation changes - New Benefit in Kind provisions from 1st January 2004

From 1st January, benefits in kind provided to employees will be taxable at source and they will be subject for the first time to PRSI and the health levy. In effect, the onus of tax accountability for such benefits shifts to the employer from the employee with both cost and administration implications. Furthermore, the changes will result in additional costs to the universities as potentially PRSI of 10.75% on all benefits must be paid. The impact of this change will need to be assessed by individual universities although Revenue guidelines for implementation are not yet available. Implementing these changes will have particular impact on the Finance, Human Resources and Payroll areas.

2.11. New Legislation Compliance Costs

The Official Languages Act 2003 passed by the Oireachtas has funding and resources implications for universities. One of the purposes of the Act is to promote the use of the Irish language for official purposes in the State and in communications with the public and in carrying out the work of public bodies. The Act designates universities as public bodies. For the purposes of the Act, obligations placed on public bodies include –

- the publication in each official language simultaneously-
 - public policy proposals,

- any annual reports,
- any audited account or financial statement,
- any statement of strategy.
- Communications with the general public or class of the general public in the Irish language or both official languages,
- Draw up at the request of the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, a scheme of services the body proposes to provide in either of or both of the official languages.

A public body maybe directed by the Minister to draw up a plan for delivery through Irish services delivered exclusively through English. Not alone does the Act fail to make provision in respect of meeting the extra costs the requirements imposed on public bodies, it actually prohibits the imposition of charges by public bodies in regard of any requirement under the Act.

3. HEA Issues

3.1. Meeting with HEA

UCFOG met with the HEA on 8th October 2003 to discuss a comprehensive range of issues with emphasis on recurrent and capital funding for 2004.

3.2. University Financial Reporting – Adoption of Consolidated Format from 30.9.03

UCFOG is considering the issues raised by the HEA in response to PWC's Financial Reporting Template. The template will be adopted for the financial year ended 30th September 2003 and it will for the first time, present a complete financial picture of the university as an enterprise based on accepted accounting standards. The existing format will also continue to be included to reflect core university activities. One key issue requiring clarification from HEA/DES relates to reporting for pensions in the context of who is ultimately responsible for pension liabilities. This is an issue impacting on the wider public sector as noted in Section 2.8.

3.3. University fees policy - Definition of an EU student

The C.H.I.U. policy document '*Criteria for Determining the Fee Status of an Applicant*' prepared by the C.H.I.U. Working Group chaired by John McGinnity, Deputy Registrar NUIM, has been cleared by C.H.I.U. solicitors and approved by the C.H.I.U. Registrars Group for implementation by the universities for 2003/04. Originally it contained a provision that non-EU students who completed an undergraduate degree at non-EU fee rates retained that status if they directly continued to postgraduate study. To avail of EU rates, applicants would have to work for three years in the EU before registering for postgraduate study. This provision is currently being considered by the Registrars' Group. The policy document covers admission fee levels for undergraduate study only, until this issue is decided upon.

The policy is based on a 'three year rule' regarding residency which follows DES criteria as set out in the Free Fees Scheme. Further legal advice may be sought as to whether the manner in which provisions accord preferential treatment to non-EU persons over EU citizens on the grounds of recent residency, raises legal or constitutional issues and whether the three year period should be longer or not in relation to our determination of non-EU rates.

3.4. *ESF Student Assistance Funding*

The HEA is seeking proposals from C.H.I.U./UCFOG to standardise procedures governing the assessment of applications for funding together with the administration of funds particularly in exceptional circumstances. There is also an opportunity to set out concerns with the existing system together with proposals for resolution.

3.5. *Student Record System*

Representatives of the C.H.I.U. Registrars' Group met with the HEA on 24th September, 2003 to review progress made between the HEA and Records Officers in the universities in regard to revised arrangements for the provision of student data. The Registrars' Group outlined concerns about the proposed database including –

- Collection of new data in the socio-economic fields,
- Increased registration time required for collection of new data,
- Reconfiguration of existing college databases and associated increased costs,
- Lack of comparability of new data with data for previous years,
- Technical feasibility of applying retention requirements for the scrambled identifier,
- Use of the Personal Public Service Number [PPSN]

3.6. *Governance*

C.H.I.U. views on DES proposals for the governance of third level institutions were conveyed to the DES. Further views are being prepared for discussion with HEA executive and DES officials.

4. *Future Strategy / Policy*

4.1. *OECD Review*

C.H.I.U. submitted views to DES on draft terms of reference for the OECD Review. Minister Dempsey launched the review on 15th August, 2003. No representatives of higher education institutes were invited to the launch. The terms of reference for the review have taken on board views and recommendations submitted by C.H.I.U. and provide for a more rounded review of higher education than originally contemplated. C.H.I.U. released a press statement on the OECD Review on 22nd September, 2003.

4.2. *Access*

4.2.1. *“Supporting Equity in Higher Education”*

The Minister for Education and Science released the report *“Supporting Equity in Higher Education”* on 22nd August, 2003. The report which is dated May 2003 is the DES review of student support provisions which was to inform the Minister's position and any government decision in relation to the future of the free third level tuition fees scheme. The Minister's announcement of a €42m support package of measures for disadvantaged students at third level and his declaration that payment of undergraduate tuition fees by students would not be reintroduced by the government were made on 25th May, 2003 when the Minister obviously had the report available to him. However, the political controversy and the uncertainty it was creating for Leaving Cert. students resulted in hasty decisions, some of which resulted in increase supports for students based on a current means test which the Minister's own report acknowledges “is widely regarded as inequitable”. While the press reports portray the Minister as moving to reform the third level maintenance grant scheme there are no clear indications that the issues raised in the report are being addressed.

4.2.2. *National Office for Access to Higher Education*

Universities were notified by the HEA of the appointment of Dr. Mary-Liz Trant as Head of the National Office with effect from 6th August, 2003. Other staff of the Office include Ms. Orla Christle, Senior Policy Advisor and Mr. Peter Brown, Programme Manager. Dr. Trant is arranging to meet individually with University Registrars to discuss access issues.

4.3. *International Students*

4.3.1. *C.H.I.U. Working Group*

Following discussion of the IDP proposal at its meeting on 16th June, 2003 the C.H.I.U. Council decided to establish a high level C.H.I.U. group chaired by Dr. Wrixon to address the development of international student recruitment and to pursue discussions with the IDP. The International Working Group met on 14th July, 2003 and the meeting was attended by the Deputy CEO of IDP who undertook to prepare a revised IDP proposal based on the views conveyed to the university representatives.

4.3.2. *Interdepartmental Working Group on Internationalisation of Education Services*

The establishment of the above interdepartmental group by Minister Dempsey came to notice by a DES advertisement in the daily newspapers on 1st August, 2003 requesting submissions on behalf of the group. The Council discussed the development at its meeting on 28/29 August and –

- was concerned that the announcement was made in August, the main vacation month for universities, and that the closing date of 15th September for submissions took no account of this reality,
- considered that the HEA Fitzpatrick's report should have been published prior to the establishment of the Interdepartmental Group and that requests for submissions should have been referenced to its recommendations,
- agreed that universities should submit a holding statement to the Working Group indicating that the opportunity to consider the Fitzpatrick's report would be required before a full submission could be made,
- agreed that the Director request views from universities as input to a C.H.I.U. submission and seek to obtain a copy of the Fitzpatrick's report as soon as possible.

An interim C.H.I.U. statement was submitted to the Working Group on 15th September, 2003. DES has indicated that the Group wishes to meet with C.H.I.U. end-October/early November and C.H.I.U. Council has decided that a delegation comprising Council Members and Registrars should meet with the Group – the Registrars to have experience with the Medical Consortium.

The Fitzpatrick's report entitled "*Provision of Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Education to Overseas Students in Ireland*" was published by the HEA in late September and copies have been sent to the universities. It will be important to include the considered responses of the universities to the report's recommendations in a further submission and presentation to the Interdepartmental Group.

4.4. *Other Developments*

4.4.1. *China*

Enterprise Ireland organised a trade mission to China from 9th to 14th October, 2003 in conjunction with a state visit by President McAleese. Minister Dempsey accompanied the President and five universities were represented along with five institutes of

technology, three private third level colleges, 10 English language schools and two second level grind schools.

The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education has prepared a Briefing Note on Higher Education in China. Part 1 deals with context and regulation of foreign activity and Part 2 deals with the scale of foreign activity and examples.

4.4.2. Japan

The Japanese Ambassador to Ireland has raised the issue of tuition fees for non-EU students attending Irish universities with the Chairman of the HEA and the Chairman of C.H.I.U. DES requested the HEA to ensure that Irish universities are represented at an ASEM Symposium on Educational Exchange to take place on 17/18 November, 2003 in Tsukuba, Japan.

5. Health Sciences Professional Courses

5.1. National Task Force on Undergraduate Medical Education

C.H.I.U. received a letter dated 8th July, 2003 from DES confirming a decision of the Ministers for Health and Children, and Education and Science to establish a working group to examine medical education and training in Ireland. The Group was subsequently titled the “National Task Force on Undergraduate Medical Education”. Original notification of this development was received in February 2003 and was reported on in Para.3.7 of C.H.I.U. Review 03/2 and Para 3.4 of C.H.I.U. Review 03/3. In proceeding with the Task Force as proposed, DES did not accept C.H.I.U.’s considered view that the immediate and short term issue concerning the finding of clinical side of medical education should be separated out from the longer term structural issues.

The following representatives have been nominated by C.H.I.U. to the Task Force which is chaired by Dr. Pat Fottrell – Professor Aidan Moran, UCC; Dr. David Redmond, NUIM; Professor Cecily Kelleher, UCD and Professor Thomas O’Dowd, TCD.

5.2. HEA Report into alternate methods of entry into Health Sciences Courses

Mr. John Hayden, Secretary/CEO and Fergal Costello, Policy Director HEA made a presentation to the C.H.I.U. Council on 16th June, 2003 on a study of medical education undertaken by a consultant, Mr. Leo Kearns, for the HEA. Matters covered in the presentation included the following:-

- The study was a follow-up to a related recommendation of the Points Commission and a provision in the current Programme for Government.
- The focus of the study was alternate methods of entry into Health Science Professional courses at third level. It was a desk research job and the main motivation was the distortion of second level education caused by the very high points requirements associated with Health Sciences courses.
- Another concern was that students should make decisions about opting for Health Science professions at a more mature age.
- The Medical Council had also expressed concern about the quality of professional training.
- The intention was that the study would establish a strategic direction and propose a framework that would allow for policy decisions, consultation and implementation in a focused manner.

- The study was tending towards recommending a broadly based graduate entry with applications for entry to Health Sciences courses being accepted from graduates from a range of primary degrees.

In discussing the presentation the Council raised the following issues:

- Any proposal to change current selection arrangements would require widespread consultations.
- The issues involved were complex and included the regulation of the professions concerned and quotas imposed on recruitment to courses.
- New selection arrangements might simply transfer pressure from school leavers to graduates.
- Recruitment from a graduate pool could require the development of a sophisticated selection process and pose real challenges on the comparability of different primary degrees.
- Making health science courses effectively post-graduate tuition would have fee payment implications for students and would be less attractive to access students.

On 19th August, 2003 the Minister for Education and Science released a press statement announcing his decisions to accept the recommendations of the HEA report which had not been finalised for publication. The Minister made the announcement without any prior consultation with the universities or other interested parties who have clear responsibilities for medical education. The HEA Report was subsequently circulated to universities. C.H.I.U. Council considered the developments at its meetings on 28/29 August and 29 September, 2003. The Council agreed that a C.H.I.U. position on the issues raised should be formulated having received and considered the co-ordinated views of the Deans of Medicine.

Concern was expressed that the Minister's statement –

- pre-empted the work of the Task Force being established jointly the Ministers for Health and Children, and Education and Science to examine undergraduate medical education,
- failed to acknowledge the autonomy of universities and the independent medical council and their critical role in decision-making and implementation on any changes to medical education,
- set a completely unrealistic time-scale for developments and was likely to give rise to uncertainty among post-primary students planning to seek entry to medical science courses.

The Registrars' Group wrote to C.H.I.U. Director on 4th September, 2003 outlining the Group's concerns about the Minister's announcement. These views were conveyed to DES and HEA drawing attention to the bottom line position that the earliest any change could take place was in respect of 2006 Leaving Cert. students and then only if all concerned parties had reached agreement by June 2004.

6. Skills Needs

6.1. *Benchmarking Education and Training for Economic Development*

In July 2003 the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs issued a report on Benchmarking Education and Training for Economic Development in Ireland. By benchmarking a range

of agreed indicators relating to education and training the report aimed to provide the context for the Expert Group to make recommendations and set realistic targets. Sections 9 and 10 of the report deal with Higher Education and Postgraduate Studies. Among the key issue identified for action were –

- consideration of measures to increase the transfer rate from secondary and further education to higher education or increasing the availability of more flexible course arrangements,
- issue of increasing male participation needs to be examined,
- the introduction of a national higher education participation rate should be examined,
- need to examine measures to increase female participation in engineering, manufacturing and construction disciplines,
- policy should focus on encouraging greater take-up of postgraduate studies particularly research related. The possibility of increasing non-national enrolment should be reviewed.

6.2. *Biotechnology Sector*

In early September 2003 the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs published a report entitled “*The Supply and Demand for Skills in the Biotechnology Sector*” prepared by Peter Bacon and Associates. The study was undertaken in order to identify the potential growth rate of the sector, to quantify the levels of skills that would be required to realise this growth and to review the projected supply of these skills over the period 2004-2010. The report highlights a number of Ireland’s strengths, which could facilitate the exploitation of the biotechnology opportunity:

- growing base of industrial activity in two closely related sectors, namely pharmaceuticals/chemicals and medical devices;
- the attendant pool of skills in pharmaceutical processing and engineering as well as specialisations such as quality control and regulatory affairs;
- substantial investment to date in basic research in biotechnology by Science Foundation Ireland; and
- Ireland’s highly competitive corporate tax regime.

The report states that Ireland must increase the supply of science-related skills in the economy if the biotechnology sector is to realise its full potential over the next 7 years and that other enabling measures are required including a vibrant research community, a culture of collaboration between academia and business and an appropriate financial framework to support this collaboration. The report -

- calls on Government to affirm its long-term commitment to the public support of science in general and biotechnology in particular, by the setting of multi-annual targets for the level of funding. **It also recommends that capital funding under the HEA-operated Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLTI) should be restored immediately.**
- recommends the following changes in the third level institutions –
 - course curricula should be aligned with the specific skills requirements of industry,

- the blurring of the traditional vertical boundaries between science disciplines to match the inter-disciplinary nature of the industry,
- science courses should be broadened to incorporate subjects such as business, marketing, law and regulatory affairs,
- students should be recruited from abroad to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at Irish third level institutions in order to boost the supply of science-related skills.

6.3. **General Review of Skills Needs in a range of sectors**

The Fourth Report of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs was published in October 2003. The report assesses the future skills needs of the ICT Sector, construction and biotechnology, and includes an examination of the food processing and logistics sectors as well as an assessment of key occupations such as engineering and financial skills. Areas of interest to universities which the report focuses on include:-

ICT: Establishing critical mass of expertise in the higher education sector in the Management of Technology Enterprises (requiring the appointment of academic staff to specialize in teaching and research in the area).

Biotechnology Sector: Supporting interventions, particularly in the development of Ireland's research competency. It recommends that all institutions should be encouraged to adopt a proactive approach to course development. Also –

- curricula should be reviewed periodically, in conjunction with industry, to ensure their continued relevance,
- current trends towards inter-departmental teaching multi-disciplinary research should be accelerated, and
- third level institutions should engage and facilitate postgraduate students to take courses taught at other institutions in order to compensate for the relatively narrow focus of biotech expertise within individual institutions. This would also promote networking and foster collaboration between institutions,
- recommended that the proposals of the ICSTI Commission be implemented to achieve greater cohesion in the science and technology system.

Engineering Skills: HEA and DES should consider financing a marketing resource to support the engineering science and computing facilities and schools in each third level college.

- HEA should provide a fund for investment in additional and upgraded space and resources in colleges for postgraduate engineering research,
- Government and relevant funding bodies should ensure that sufficient and timely funding is made available for research by engineering postgraduates,
- positive action should be taken to recruit engineering students from overseas,

Construction Industry: The education system should provide approx. 45 additional places annually for students who wish to study architecture. This recommendation could be implemented through increasing capacity in the two existing schools. Both of these schools are located in Dublin city and it is possible that a 'gateway' regional location would be more consistent with the National Spatial Strategy.

Food Processing Sector: A National Innovation-in-Education-Exchange (IIEE), consisting of members drawn from the third level sector and industry, should be established to ensure that college curricula development takes industry requirements more fully into account. Third level colleges should ensure that –

- at undergraduate level, all food-related courses include modules on food hygiene and food safety, and
- in science and technology subjects, interpersonal/people/team-working skills should be enhanced via teaching methods used,
- existing postgraduate programmes, where appropriate, should be adapted by the third level colleges, to include core modules on commercialisation of Food NDP and Food Sales/Marketing,
- a course should be developed in functional food/nutrition/medicine.

Soft Skills: Higher education institutions, should in the development and review of curricula, have regard to the need to address soft skills development for students. The work undertaken by TCD, DCU and WIT in this regard, the report suggests may assist all institutions.

7. Enterprise Strategy Group

The Tánaiste announced the establishment of the Enterprise Strategy Group on 1st August, 2003. The Group's task is to advise and make recommendations on Ireland's future policy options for encouraging and generating growth and employment in the economy. Eoin O'Driscoll is Chairman of the Group and Dr. John Hegarty, Provost TCD, is a member. The Group Chairman wrote to C.H.I.U. Chair on 15th September, 2003 inviting C.H.I.U. to make a written submission. C.H.I.U. Council decided at its meeting on 29th September, 2003 that C.H.I.U. would work with the Deans of Research Group and consult with other university officers with expertise in the key areas of concern to the Strategy Group to prepare a C.H.I.U. paper

8. NCCA

8.1. NCCA Senior Cycle

In response to the NCCA suggestion for a meeting with C.H.I.U. as part of its consultation process on proposals for Senior Cycle reform, representatives of the C.H.I.U. Registrars' Group met with the NCCA Executive on 15th September, 2003 and set out views of the Registrars' Group in a letter of the same date to the NCCA.

Representatives of the Registrars' Group and other university officers attended the NCCA Forum on Developing Senior Cycle Education held on 23rd September, 2003. The NCCA presented a paper on directions for developing the Senior Cycle which "takes as its horizon the year 2010 and envisions what directions the senior cycle may have taken by that time".

The paper entitled "*Directions for Development*" deals with four areas of development –

- school culture for senior cycle students,
- a restructured learning experience at senior cycle,
- a rebalanced curriculum and different assessment arrangements,
- a new certificate at senior cycle.

The NCCA identifies as crucial to progress four supporting strategies,

- investment in change,
- professional development for teachers and support for schools,
- information for and engagement with parents and students,
- monitoring research and evaluation,

“Directions for Development” was presented as an invitation to further discussion and debate on the future of senior cycle education until the end of 2003 after which the NCCA will advise the Minister for Education and Science on the future shape of senior cycle education.

8.2. *LCVP Link Modules*

Proposals from the C.H.I.U. Registrars’ Group for revising the points awarded to LCVP Link Modules for entry purposes to universities have been approved by most of the universities at this stage. One at least has changed the points in the prospectus for 2004 entry, others are including the revised position in the alert list for guidance counselors. It would not be appropriate for C.H.I.U. to issue a statement on behalf of the sector until all universities have made a decision on the proposal.

9. *International*

9.1. *Berlin Communiqué*

On 19th September 2003, Ministers responsible for higher education from 33 European countries met in Berlin in order to review the progress achieved since the Prague meeting in 2001 and to set priorities and new objectives for the coming years, with a view to speeding up the realisation of the European Higher Education Area. The Irish contribution to the successive drafts of the communiqué is clearly in evidence in this final version. Ministers emphasise the importance of all elements of the Bologna Process for establishing the European Higher Education Area and stress the need to intensify the efforts at institutional, national and European level. However, to give the Process further momentum, they commit themselves to intermediate priorities for the next two years. They will strengthen their efforts to promote effective quality assurance systems, to step up effective use of the system based on two cycles and to improve the recognition system of degrees and periods of studies.

9.2. *Establishment of a system of credits*

In the Communiqué, European Education Ministers stress the important role played by the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in facilitating student mobility and international curriculum development. They note that ECTS is increasingly becoming a generalised basis for the national credit systems. They encourage further progress with the goal that the ECTS becomes not only a transfer but also an accumulation system, to be applied consistently as it develops within the emerging European Higher Education Area. It has been agreed that the Registrars will establish an ECTS Committee to implement the goals of the Communiqué.

9.3. *Diploma Supplement*

European Education Ministers have set the objective that every student graduating as from 2005 should receive the Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge. It should be issued in a widely spoken European language. They appeal to institutions and

employers to make full use of the Diploma Supplement, so as to take advantage of the improved transparency and flexibility of the higher education degree systems, for fostering employability and facilitating academic recognition for further studies.

The Registrars established a Diploma Supplement Committee last academic year to explore agreement on a common format for the diploma supplement. The work of the Committee is well advanced.

Work on the follow-up to the Berlin meeting, especially with regard to ECTS and the Diploma Supplement, is being coordinated nationally by a committee of the Department of Education and Science. C.H.I.U. is represented by Don McQuillan.

9.4. *National Bologna Conference*

The Department of Education and Science organised a conference on the Bologna Process on 23 July in Dublin Castle. C.H.I.U. Chair gave an invited address entitled ‘‘Bologna Process – Universities Perspective’’. D. McQuillan chaired a Break-Out Group entitled ‘‘Quality Assurance in Higher Education Institutions’’.

9.5. *EUA Meetings*

The 8th EUA Council Meeting was held on 4th July, 2003 in Leuven. Main issues addressed were finalisation of the Graz Declaration and preparations for the Berlin Ministers Meeting on 18/19 September, 2003. The 5th EUA Conference will be held in Cluj, Romania, on 24/25 October, 2003. The conference ‘‘Universities Working Together in Europe’’ will pursue the further development of joint degrees and joint programmes which received support in the Berlin Communiqué.

10. Quality Assurance

10.1. *European Higher Education Area*

The quality of higher education has proven to be at the heart of the setting up of a European Higher Education Area. Ministers have committed themselves to supporting further development of quality assurance at institutional, national and European level. They emphasise the need to develop mutually shared criteria and methodologies on quality assurance. They also stress that consistent with the principle of institutional autonomy, the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself and this provides the basis for real accountability of the academic system within the national quality framework. Therefore, they have agreed that by 2005 national quality assurance systems should include:

- A definition of the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved,
- Evaluation of programmes or institutions, including internal assessment, external review, participation of students and the publication of results,
- A system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures,
- International participation, co-operation and networking.

European Ministers call upon ENQA through its members, in co-operation with the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB, to develop an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance, to explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies, and to report back through the Follow-up Group to Ministers in 2005. Due account is to be taken of the expertise of other quality assurance associations and networks.

10.2. *EUA Graz Declaration*

The European University Association, following on the Graz Convention report, has published the Graz Declaration, which expresses the views of 34 national conferences of Rectors of Europe concerning the Bologna Process and their priorities:

In terms of promoting a European dimension to Quality Assurance, EUA proposes a coherent policy approach for Europe, involving all partners, and based on the belief that QA procedures for Europe must:

- promote academic and organizational quality,
- respect institutional autonomy,
- develop internal quality cultures,
- be cost effective,
- include evaluation of the QA agencies,
- minimize bureaucracy and cost,
- avoid over regulation.

EUA therefore proposes that stakeholders, and in particular universities, should collaborate to establish a provisional 'Higher Education Quality Committee for Europe'. This should be independent, respect the responsibility of institutions for quality and demonstrate responsiveness to public concerns. It would provide a forum for discussion and, through the appointment of a small board, monitor the application of a proposed code of principles, developing a true European dimension in quality assurance.

It is important to highlight the congruence between these EUA principles on QA and the founding principles of the Irish universities QA processes. Dr. Pádraig Walsh, DCU, has prepared a document which describes this congruence in detail.

10.3. *European Consortium for Accreditation*

In June 2003 a workshop on the establishment of a European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA) was organised at the initiative of the Netherlands Accreditation Organisation (NAO). Thirteen accreditation organisations from eight countries, all members of ENQA, participated in the workshop. The countries are Austria, Flanders, Germany, Ireland (HETAC), the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Switzerland. The ultimate aim of ACE is the achievement of mutual recognition of accreditation decisions, either bilaterally or multilaterally.

10.4. *ENQA*

The Berlin Communiqué, in the section on quality assurance quoted above, accords a special place to ENQA in the follow-up debate on quality assurance and accreditation. It is crucial that the Irish universities, and indeed the whole Irish Higher Education sector, be fully engaged in the discussions in the lead-up to the ministerial meeting in Bergen in 2005.

The creation of the European Consortium for Accreditation might indicate that not all member agencies of ENQA are happy with that organisation's approach to accreditation. In accordance with the wishes of IUQB expressed at its meeting on 26 June, Don McQuillan will meet with Christian Thune, Director of ENQA, to explore IUQB membership of ENQA. The meeting will take place in Karlstad on 12/13 November 2003. Especially helpful will be a paper prepared by Dr. Pádraig Walsh showing how the role of IUQB fits with that of agencies that are members of ENQA.

10.5. IUQB

The first meeting of the IUQB took place in Dublin on 25/26 June, 2003. Presentations were made to the Board on Third Level Education in Ireland, on positioning the IUQB in the national and international context, and on case studies of QA reviews in three of the universities. There was full participation by all members in the ensuing discussions. It was agreed that the Board should meet four times a year, about three weeks after the meetings of C.H.I.U. It was also agreed that –

- A sub-committee consisting of IUQB Chair, C.H.I.U. Chair and IUQB CEO should enter discussions with the HEA on the format and timing of the section 49 review of our QA procedures,
- CEO should explore IUQB membership of ENQA with the ENQA leadership,
- The IUQB required adequate resources, including separate premises and proper central staffing, if it is to fulfil its important role both nationally and internationally and that the matter required immediate attention,
- IBEC nominee should prepare an information paper on ‘brands’,
- CEO should report on the Dutch accreditation system ,

The next meeting of the Board will take place on 19th November in the Boardroom of C.H.I.U.

10.6. IUQB Sectoral Projects

The sectoral proposal to the HEA for QA funding that was submitted in June 2003 built on last year’s proposal and requested funding for two projects entitled ‘*Strategic Planning and Organisation in Academic Departments*’ and ‘*Sectoral Initiative on QI in Teaching and Learning*’. In addition, the proposal included a request for funding for project management support.

This year the three projects on PhD Training, Student Services and Mathematics Learning require the organisation of three Irish conferences and three international conferences in late 2003 or early 2004, with a similar commitment to the two new projects envisaged for next year. In spite of the dedication of the Quality Officers in each university it will not be possible for them to undertake the central co-ordination, organisation and management work required by this sectoral programme in addition to their normal university duties which are also expanding. The PhD and Student Services projects currently underway are of particular international importance in the context of the Bologna Process. They tie in with projects organised by the European University Association, and Andréé Sursock, Deputy Secretary General of EUA, has asked to be kept apprised of progress. The co-ordination, organisation and implementation demands of combined measures, are such that their successful completion requires the input of a concentrated and consistent programme management support at a central level.

10.7. Section 49 QA Review

The HEA signalled some time ago that it intended proceeding with a QA review under Section 49 of the Universities Act. In July and September, meetings were held with the HEA to discuss proposals which the HEA were developing for the review in conjunction with the EUA and to clarify the respective roles of the universities in relation to QA previews under Sections 34(5) and 49(b) of the Universities Act. The importance of making early progress on arrangements for Section 34(5) reviews was acknowledged and the following remit of the IUQB in that regard was emphasised:

“The Board will have a particular role in regard to protocols for the conduct of the reviews of the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance procedures in the universities as required by Section 35(4) of the Universities Act. The Board will approve the agencies that will conduct these periodic reviews and will provide reports on this process to the Council of C.H.I.U. and to the HEA”.

The possibility of advancing Sections 34(5) and 49 reviews in tandem is being explored.

10.8. *Irish Higher Education Quality Network*

One of the outcomes of the National Bologna Conference held on 23rd July 2003 was the establishment of the ‘Irish Higher Education Quality Network’. The first meeting of the network which was covered by the IUQB CEO took place on 9 October in the Boardroom of C.H.I.U., with representatives from DES, HEA, IUQB, NQAI, USI, HETAC and DIT. Initially the goal is to create a forum for exchange of information on quality issues.

10.9. *Conferences*

IUQB CEO has been invited to represent the Board at two international conferences. He will make a presentation entitled ‘Quality Assurance in Irish Universities’ to the Nordic University Association Conference on Quality Assurance to be held in Karlstad on 12/13 November, 2003. Eric Froment and Christian Thune will also present papers at this conference. He will participate in the AUNP First Round Table Meeting on ‘Quality Assurance in ASEAN and the European Union’, 30th November to 3rd December 2003 in Bangkok, organised by the ASEAN-EU University Network Programme.

11. NQAI

At the request of the NQAI, representatives of the C.H.I.U. Registrars’ Group met with the NQAI Executive on 23rd September, 2003. The NQAI briefed the Registrars on concerns that had been raised by some stakeholders in relation to certain NQAI’s titles’ determinations in the outline national framework of qualifications. The need to maintain the status and integrity of the degree and the universities’ opposition to the adoption of the title of “Associate Degree” were stated strongly by the Registrars’ Group.

The NQAI Conference on 17th October, 2003 to launch the National Framework of Qualifications is hosted by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland in association with FETAC, HETAC, C.H.I.U., DIT and NCCA. At the conference, the National Framework of Qualifications will be introduced and examined, and the issues involved in its implementation will be explored from different perspectives – further education and training, higher education and training, schools, employment and access, transfer and progression. The Chair of the C.H.I.U. Registrars’ Group will make a presentation at the Conference.

12. Copyright

The C.H.I.U./CoDIT/DIT Working Group on Copyright wrote to ICLA setting out the combined views of the university and IoT sectors on the ICLA scheme. A meeting between representatives of the Group and ICLA took place on 14th October, 2003.

13. AVCC Visit

UCC hosted a very successful visit by a delegation from the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee to Cork and a C.H.I.U./AVCC symposium from 27th to 29th August, 2003. Arising from the presentations and discussion at the symposium arrangements are being made to promote co-operation between Irish and Australian universities in the area of research. The AVCC has invited C.H.I.U. to make a return visit in September 2004.

14. IBEC/C.H.I.U. Joint Council

Following an initial review by IBEC of its participation in the Council, IBEC has enlarged its membership and new IBEC members have been appointed in addition to Eoin O'Driscoll who is current Chair.

15. Human Resources Issues

15.1. *Benchmarking and pay round increase*

The Public Service Pay Agreement as part of “*Sustaining Progress: Social Partnership Agreement 2003-2005*” provides that payment of the final two phases of the benchmarking increases and the general round increases is dependent in the case of each sector, organisation and grade, on verification of satisfactory achievement on co-operation with flexibility and ongoing change and satisfactory implementation of the agenda for modernisation outlined in the Agreement as well as stable industrial relations. Universities submitted for approval to the Performance Verification Group for the education sector action plans for the achievement of targets on modernisation, flexibility and ongoing change. Payment of pay increases is subject to PVG approval for the action plan and further progress reports.

15.2. *Performance Management*

Sustaining Progress (20.7) also provides that appropriate performance management systems at individual team and organisation levels so that developed performance management systems will be fully operating by 1st January, 2005. Performance management is also included in the change agenda outlined as follows for the HE Sector in para.24.1.:

- Institutional planning and strategic development,
- Specific initiatives arising from Quality Assurance and the developing ethos of continuous quality improvement and service delivery,
- Changing structures and reporting relationships arising from new research institutes and other organisational developments, and
- Performance development and management to ensure alignment of performance and effort with organisational goals and strategies.