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1. Strategy Process

Following the circulation of the outline strategic issues paper at its meeting on 29th January, Council endorsed the proposal to develop a comprehensive strategy document. The key starting point for the process is the accumulation of a robust base of data – identifying the current position and key trends. To that end IUA circulated a data request on 16th February. Responses are currently being collated, but at the time of circulation of this review, not all data fields are complete. In addition to this exercise, an analysis has been undertaken of the published strategies for the individual universities. This analysis indicates a high degree of coherence in terms of vision and mission across all institutions. To further the strategy process, a presentation will be made to council on these aspects and with the aim of further refining the key strategic issues.

2. Research
2.1. National Research Policy
2.1.1. Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation 2006-2013

As reported for the last meeting the SSTI will be overseen by two key groups, the Higher Education and Research Group (HERG) and Technology Ireland. The IUA is represented by N.Costello on HERG along with delegates from the key funding agencies and government departments, and the Group is chaired by the Department of Education and Science.

There are currently four active working groups, namely -

- ***Research Careers*** – C. O'Carroll (meetings already held on 7th and 27th February)
  This group is focusing for the moment at getting the perspective on research careers in the public sector from the IUA, Research Groups (Trinity Research Staff Association TRSA) and the Institutes of Technology**.** In parallel, the Advisory Science Council is carrying out a study on research careers focusing on industry (IUA is separately involved in this study that is being carried out by Technopolis on behalf of ASC). These issues will be discussed at the next VP/Deans of Research meeting on 26th March

- ***High Level Indicators*** – M. Casey (meeting held on 12th February)
  This group is focusing on the development of a comprehensive and consistent set of indicators to track application of the SSTI and its outcomes over time**.**

- ***Capacity Development*** – S. Harkin (meeting to be arranged).

- *Infrastructure*

  A special meeting of this group was held on 15th March to discuss the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI). There is a list of agreed European infrastructures and Ireland needs to prioritise involvement in a selection of these that will be of high strategic relevance. It was clear from the meeting that up to now this has largely been a top down approach by the funding agencies and we need to fully engage the research community to ensure maximum benefit for the universities. This will be done by IUA over the coming weeks with the VP/Deans of Research.

2.2. European Research Policy

2.2.1. *Third Country Directive*

The IUA is playing a key role in the dissemination of information on the Third Country Directive Scheme and continues to work directly with this department and the Department of Justice and Enterprise to progress the Directive. DETE, following consultation with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Department of Education and Science and the IUA, are currently finalising a standard format for hosting agreements which can then be issued to registered institutions.

Ireland has already formally opted into the Directive which must be transposed by 12th October 2007. The Directive provides for a fast track procedure for admitting third-country nationals for more than three months to carry out a research project with an accredited research institution. This will be a major advance on the current system as they will not require a separate work permit.

2.3. Higher Education Authority

2.3.1 *PRTLI Cycle 4*

In preparation for the PRTLI deadline the VP/Deans of Research Group met on 14th February, 2007. The focus of this discussion was to agree on a number of Category 3 proposals – these are proposals that are considered national priorities and involve all of the universities (RCSI was also involved in the relevant disciplines). In the history of PRTLI this was an unprecedented level of collaboration across the university sector.

2.4. Science Foundation Ireland

2.4.1. *New Director General*

The Board of Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) has appointed Dr. Frank Gannon as the new Director General for the organisation. Dr. Gannon will formally take up the position in May 2007. Dr. Gannon is an internationally successful researcher and is familiar with SFI as a former Board Member. Since 1994, Dr Gannon has led the European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) as Executive Director, based in Heidelberg, Germany. He has also served as Secretary General of the European Molecular Biology Conference (EMBC), EMBO's

intergovernmental funding body, and as Senior Scientist at the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL).

2.4.2. *SFI Grant Payments and Claims Cycles*

As reported in the January IUA Review, arising from the meeting of UCFOG and Vice-Presidents/Deans of Research with SFI on 1st December, 2006 an IUA working group was convened to liaise with SFI in relation to the issues arising from the proposed changes to the grant claims process and related payment cycle, and in relation to an 'overpayment' of research overheads arising from the transition from the old overhead funding basis to the OIP.

The working group met with SFI representatives on 9th February, 2007. At that meeting SFI outlined the revised processes and procedures relating to grant funding. The primary points to note are as follows:-

- Overheads (at 30% of MTDC) will be paid in advance at the time of payment of direct costs.
- New reporting templates have been developed by SFI.
- Reporting and grant payments cycles are being realigned to a calendar year basis and from 2008 two claims (and grant payments) will be required. A detailed (long form) report in February reporting actual expenditure to December and projecting expenditure to June (for payment in March) and a short form report in August reporting actual to June and projecting expenditure to December (for payment in September/October).
- Transitional arrangements will apply in respect of 2007.
- A detailed reconciliation process in respect of overheads payments, arising from the changes in the basis of overhead payments, will be required.
- Letters of offer have been revised to reflect the changes to the claims and payments processes.

Further detail in respect of the new arrangements and the issues arising are set out in the detailed note of the meeting on the 9th February and the correspondence issued from SFI in relation to these matters.

2.4.3. *Research Overheads*

The inadequacy of funding for the indirect costs of research remains a significant issue for the sector. Such under-funding is impacting on core university resources, which are effectively subsidising the shortfalls in research funding. This is likely to become even more pressing in the context of the growth in research activity projected under the SSTI. The University Chief Finance Officers Group has raised this issue with the HEA and urged them to establish, as a matter of urgency, a working group to review the adequacy and appropriateness of current funding arrangements for the indirect costs of research.

2.5. Knowledge Transfer

The Directors of Technology Transfer are dealing with two key items for the sector:

i. *Development of a Conflict of Interest Policy*
This was originally mooted by SFI / Enterprise Ireland on behalf of all funding agencies but it was agreed that it should be led by the sector. The focus is to develop a system that will identify and manage potential conflicts of interests for academics/researchers who are involved in projects from multiple public/private sources

ii. *Assessment of feasibility for an All island Technology Transfer Initiative*
A study was carried out in 2005 by Heriot Watt Technology Transfer services on behalf of InterTrade Ireland to assess the feasibility of an All Island Technology Transfer initiative. However since this report was published there have been major developments in the universities with the arrival of new Directors. The report will be assessed to see if it is still applicable.

2.6. Irish Researcher Mobility Office and Web Portal

2.6.1. *Report on Activity in 2006*
The Implementation Report for 2006 was sent to the European Commission, covering all the activities of the office.

2.6.2. *Developments 2007*
The external contractors, J4B, are in the process of developing the extranet which supports the advertising of Job opportunities on *www.researchcareersireland.com*. This development will make the uploading and searching functions more user-friendly and takes into account suggestions made by the network since the launch of the research job opportunities facility in July 2006. This development will be supported by DETE funding Year 3 of the CAIRDE project.

2.6.3. *Statistics*
Following the launch of the job opportunities facility on *www.researchcareersireland.com* in July 2006, statistical analysis collated prior to the preparation of this report can be summarized as follows:
- 4992 Job Searches on the portal
- 88 Job Applications made directly via the portal application facility but this does not reflect the large number of applications that have been made directly to the organisation
- 789 organisations profile searches have been made by registered users.

There are now 1,207 users registered on the portal and this number is continuously growing (207 since last review). Users can be categorised as follows:
- Early Stage Researchers (Post-graduates) 437
- Experienced Researchers (Post Doc) 378

- Senior Researchers 267
- Undergraduates 37
- Other 88

2.6.4. AAAS Meeting

The IUA was represented for the third year running at the American Association for the Advancement of Science Conference in San Francisco, in February 2007.

2.7. EU Seventh Framework Programme

The first calls for FP7 will be closing in April/May 2007. This European programme will be an essential part of the research portfolio of all universities given the necessity to generate leverage from non exchequer funding under SSTI.

2.7.1 Role of IUA in FP7

Dr. Dagmar Meyer will join the IUA on 2nd April to run the Marie Curie office for FP7. Dagmar is currently an Associate Professor of Mathematics at the University of Göttingen in Germany. She has great experience in this area as she is a former Marie Curie fellow and was head of the Marie Curie Fellowship Association. Dagmar has also served on the European Commission External Advisory Group for Research Mobility and Careers.

2.8. *expertiseireland.com*

The last quarter has seen an increase in the number of people being contacted through the portal. Experts on the portal have been contacted regarding providing technical assessment expertise, collaboration on various projects, both industrial and academic, and users looking for post graduate opportunities.

expertiseireland.com, representing the Irish Universities Association, had a stand at the American Association for the Advancement of Science Conference in San Francisco, in February 2007. There was a general high level of interest from people looking for experts that they could talk to regarding post graduate and post doctoral positions. There was also interest from internationally based academics that were looking to expand their collaboration networks to additional Institutions within Ireland. There were meetings with the IDA and Consul General of San Francisco.

There were also discussions with the Vice President of Enterprise Ireland in New York, regarding the technologies available for licensing from the third level sector that are showcased on the portal. There was a very high level of interest in this section and there was an agreement to start promoting this facility to companies in the US. However, questions were raised regarding the inclusion of all technologies available for licensing, since many of the opportunities published on the portal are in the biotechnology sector. *expertiseireland.com* was invited to participate in events which Enterprise Ireland in New York may organise to promote Ireland, the research expertise and technologies available.

The number of experts contributing information to the portal stands at 5,234 as of 15th March, 2007. The breakdown is as follows:

University of Dublin, Trinity College	810
University College Dublin	658
Dublin Institute of Technology	660
University of Ulster	613
University College Cork	502
Dublin City University	474
National University of Ireland, Galway	465
Queen's University Belfast	409
University of Limerick	316
National University of Ireland, Maynooth	260
Athlone Institute of Technology	28
Waterford Institute of Technology	20
Letterkenny Institute of Technology	15
Institute of Technology, Tallaght	4

Table 2: A Comparison of the average annual statistics for year ending February 2006 vs. year ending February 2007			
	2006	**2007**	**% Change**
Average duration per visit	3,133	20	-99.4%
# Page Impressions	313,731	322,875	2.9%
# Searches	26,693	21,310	-22.2%
# Visits	32,276	30,974	-4.0%
News articles viewed	2,337	1,667	-28.7%
# Expert Profiles accessed	38,073	38,925	2.2%

The comparison of annual statistics shows that the marketing campaign for the *expertiseireland.com* portal needs to be pursued more aggressively if we are to match the statistics for the previous year.

3. University Reform

3.1. Strategic Innovation Fund [SIF]

3.1.1. *SIF Cycle 1 – University Sector Collaboration Proposal*
Individual projects under the IUA sectoral project are ramping up activities. Clarification on the contractual and reporting requirement has been sought from the HEA by the IUA.

3.1.2. *Meeting with CoDIT*
The IUA held a meeting with representatives from CoDIT on 14th March 2007, to discuss sectoral projects where the HEA requested that the two sectors liaise and to explore other synergies in relation to SIF. Specific follow-up actions related to Full Economic Cost, Strategic Planning and Leadership projects were agreed, as well as the establishment of a high-level group on SIF across both sectors. The objectives of this group will be to report on common projects, to provide an overview on the broader sets of SIF projects, to exchange information and to inform the evolution of the SIF process. Nomination to this group will be finalised by 25th March 2007.

3.1.3. *SIF Cycle II Planning – IUA Proposal*
The planning phase for SIF Cycle II was initiated in early February, with a discussion document prepared by the IUA being sent to the universities outlining potential areas for sectoral consideration and proposed steps forward.

A meeting was held by the IUA with the HEA to discuss Cycle II. HEA indicated that the Call for Cycle II would be after Easter with a closure date of sometime in July 2007. The objectives of the scheme would be broadly similar to Cycle I.

A steering group, comprising the Registrars and other Senior Management and specialists has been established, and their first meeting was held on 27th March 2007.

4. Funding

4.1.1. *Current Funding 2006/2007*
The HEA has approved a two-phase approach to 2007 recurrent grant allocations. Phase I involves the allocation of an interim grant to all institutions based on 2006 grant outturns plus a flat rate increase of 3% and all institutions have now been advised of their phase I allocations. The balance of funding available will subsequently be allocated following completion of the audit of student numbers – no later than July 2007.

4.1.2. *Tuition Fee Increase Submission 2007/08*
We await a response to the sector's submission in respect of the required increase in tuition fees for 2007/08.

4.1.3. Recurrent Grant Allocation Model

The HEA has been in on-going consultation with the IUA Registrar's group in respect of the finalisation of student data definitions and clarification of interpretations. Guidelines for student data relating to the RGAM have now been agreed. It was agreed that revised student returns in line with the agreed guidelines would be submitted to the HEA by the end of March 2007.

The IUA has also continued to liaise with the HEA in relation to the implementation of the revised recurrent grant allocation model (RGAM). The HEA is progressing with the audit of student numbers in order to ascertain the accuracy of the data returns under the new guidelines. Following consultation with the IUA through the Finance Officers and Registrar's groups terms of reference have been agreed for the student numbers audit. The HEA has appointed John Hayden (ex-HEA), Michael Kelleher (ex-UCC) and Caroline Hussey (ex-UCD) to undertake phase I of the audit. A series of site visits will take place during the period 15 March 16 April 2007.

The HEA has also circulated, for consideration, copies of two reports it commissioned assessing the risks associated with the implementation of the new RGAM. These reports included consideration of incorporating completion/graduation rates adjustments into the model and adjustments to take account of fee differentials and/or whether fees should be in proportion to price band weightings. It is proposed that the HEA be invited to make a presentation in respect of these reports to UCFOG.

4.2. Capital Funding

In response to the request from IUA Council to consider funding alternatives for universities to raise the substantial funding required for campus infrastructure programmes UCFOG wrote to IUA Council in this regard. UCFOG has recommended that a cross disciplinary working group be convened to develop a fees or 'top-up' fees model. This matter will be discussed at Council as part of the consideration of overall strategy.

4.3. Matching Funding Requirements

While the announcements in recent months of additional funding opportunities for the sector through the Strategic Innovation Fund and the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation are welcomed, the '*matching funding*' or '*leverage*' requirements of these programmes are proving to be quite onerous and this creates a significant challenge for universities. UCFOG has written to IUA Council in this regard recommending that this issue be raised with the HEA and government departments as a matter of urgency.

4.4. Pension Issues

The IUA through the HEA Pensions Working Group continues to work with the HEA, DES and DoF to resolve the issues facing university pension schemes. It is hoped that the Minister for Finance will, by early April agree in principle to the proposal that existing university pension

schemes be taken over by the State and that the funds be transferred to the National Treasury Management Agency.

In relation to pension entitlements for researchers UCFOG wrote to the HEA in February seeking clarification in respect of funding arrangements for such pension entitlements and in particular in respect of researchers funded from non-state sources. These issues will be considered by the HEA Pensions Working Group.

In accordance with the requirements of Financial Reporting Standard 17 (FRS 17) full pension liabilities are required to be shown in the balance sheet of universities for the first time in 2005/06 financial statements. The application of this reporting standard will result in all universities reporting very substantial deficits in their financial statements. The C&AG is requiring universities to reflect a matching asset on the implicit assumption that pensions will be paid by the state. This is in contrast to university external auditors who have indicated that it is not appropriate to reflect such an asset given without a clear, formal guarantee from the state to meet pension liabilities. This reinforces the need to ensure that an appropriate robust guarantee is obtained from the state in respect of pension liabilities. The sector will be liaising with the C&AG, HEA and external auditors to resolve these issues.

4.5. Nursing – Transfer of Midwifery and Children's Nursing Education to Third Level
Agreement has been reached on the basis of transfer of the post registration programme in midwifery education to third level institutions. The programme will be provided on an 18 month 'back-to-back' basis commencing in Autumn 2007. The basis of the agreement is set out in the letter from the HSE.

4.6. Taxation Issues
KPMG has been engaged to advise in relation to the issues arising from the correspondence received from the Revenue Commissioners in relation to PAYE related issues as reported in the January 2007 IUA Review.

5. HEA/Department of Education & Science
5.1. Guidelines on the Engagement of Consultants
In February 2007 the HEA circulated details of the above guidelines to universities. The guidelines, which have been issued by the Department of Finance relate to the engagement of consultants and other external support. The Minister for Finance has directed that these guidelines be put into operation immediately so as to secure value for money in public procurement and to comply with both national and EU law.

5.2. Recurrent Grant Allocation Model
Full report is detailed at Section 4.1.3.

5.3. Data Collection re. Under-Represented Student Groups

A final meeting took place on 23rd January, 2007 between the HEA, IUA representatives and representatives of the Institutes of Technology to discuss and finalise details of data collection by higher education institutions on the social, economic and cultural backgrounds of students. The resulting Implementation Guidelines and Data Questions document was then circulated by the HEA to all Universities and Institutes of Technology as a basis for data collection for the admissions process in Autumn 2007. This data will then be used in order to allocate the 1.33 additional weighting for access students under the RGAM.

5.4. Internationalisation

A meeting took place on 26 February 2007 between the executives of the IUA and the International Education Board of Ireland (IEBI) to discuss the ongoing relationship between these bodies. It was agreed that IUA would continue to pay a collective subscription to IEBI on behalf of the 7 universities for 2007, on the basis of a service-level agreement between the two organisations. IEBI was asked to propose a draft agreement.

6. Communications / Events

6.1. Marketing the University Sector and IUA Services

6.1.1. Third Issue of IUA Newsletter

The third edition of the newsletter was distributed by email on 27th March to over 1000 recipients. Dr John Hegarty gave his first address as IUA President for 2007. Another first was the introduction to new CEO, Ned Costello. Feature stories included announcement of two new IUA staff members, upcoming conferences and the retirement event for Michael McGrath, former Director of the IUA.

6.1.2. IUA Website Development

The IUA will launch its new-look website at the beginning of April 2007. Content will be updated and made more relevant. The look and feel of the website will be fresher and more vibrant with easier navigation and a new search facility.

6.1.3. 4th Level Ireland Website Development

While still a part of the IUA website, work has begun on creating a stand-alone website for **Fourth Level Ireland** www.4thlevelireland.ie. A logo has been created and some of the initial design work has begun. Activity on this will progress rapidly when the new Network Co-ordinator for Graduate Schools takes up his post on 28th May.

6.1.4. Communications Group Meeting

The inaugural meeting of the IUA Communications Group will take place at the end of April 2007. This group is being brought together to create a professional network to aid the transfer of skills and experience in a non-competitive manner and to jointly promote the university sector.

Items on the agenda - created jointly by the IUA and TCD who will chair the meeting, and agreed by the Communications officers - will include:

- Agreement on key themes and subjects for promotion in the media by universities
- Opportunities for joint promotion to compete as a sector
- Communicating to the customers – students, parents and press.
- Lobbying as a sector
- Training
- Issue/Crisis Management
- Internal Communications
- Quality
- Consistency of message
- Resources

In advance of the April meeting, IUA communications Manager, L.O'Sullivan, will continue with her visits to the communications teams of each of the universities.

6.2.   Press/Publicity and Media Relations
March 07:
Both N.Costello and C.O'Carroll were interviewed by Irish Times journalists for feature articles in the Postgraduate Supplement of 6th March

6th March	Irish Times	*The Grand Design for 4th Level*
6th March	Irish Times	*Softer Skills Needed for Advancement*

6.3.   International Affairs
6.3.1. *Preparation for Euro Posgrados – Mexico : 26th–28th March 2007*
The IUA International Officers group have engaged the services of Gerard Goulé to act as their representative at the Euro Posgrados Fair in Mexico The Communications office at IUA is assisting Mr. Goulé with leaflets and other promotional items to be circulated at the event. A supply of the new IUA 4th Level Ireland brochure, as well as the IUA International Brochure, has been provided.

6.3.2. *NAFSA 07 – Minneapolis : 27th May – 1st June*
Following the first planning meeting in DCU on 26th January the IUA is preparing the rota for this event and is assisting Education Ireland in the design of the NAFSA stand. A "street" style of stand has been decided upon and the design will be completed by the end of March. This year all nine universities on the island of Ireland will be taking part.

6.3.3. Distribution of IUA International Brochure

The Chinese version of the joint international brochure produced by the IUA has been widely distributed at education fairs throughout China with the assistance of the TCD and Enterprise Ireland offices in Shanghai. Locations for the education fairs include Beijing, Chongqing, Shanghai, Nanjing and Guangzhow. The brochure is also available on-line on the IUA website for prospective students and their parents to download.

6.4. Events

In addition to IUA organised events, members of IUA staff will also partake in a number of external events throughout 2007.

6.4.1. American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Exhibition
15th - 21st February, 2007, San Francisco

This event was attended by *expertiseireland.com*, the Researcher Mobility Office Ireland and the IUA. The IUA Communications Manager was responsible for promoting 4th Level Ireland. Some good contacts were made with delegates considering further study abroad and the 4th Level brochure was widely distributed at the fair. Contact was also made with the Postdoctoral Program Coordinator at New York University School of Medicine, Robert Tillman, who is keen to invite staff and/or students from Irish universities to their Open Day in October. Contact was also made with The National Science Digital Library and their details will be forwarded to the Librarians Group for assistance or advice on the SIF digital library project.

6.4.2. National Forum on Europe, Research and the Knowledge Economy:
Dublin Castle, 22nd March 2007

The National Forum on Europe provides a neutral public space for debate on issues relating to the European Union and Ireland's role within the Union. The Members of the Forum are the political parties represented in the Oireachtas, Members of the European Parliament and civil society organisations, including the IUA.

6.4.3. Evaluating Research Performance / Quality in the Social Sciences
RIA, 3rd May 2007

C.O'Carroll will be giving a presentation at this workshop. The IUA are contributing to the cost of this event, along with the IRCHSS & AcSS. Material for the event will carry the IUA logo and an exhibition space will also be made available.

6.4.4. IUA National Launch of Marie Curie in FP7
Dublin Venue, End May

An IUA organised event to mark the launch of the Marie Curie Programme for FP7. Funding for this launch will be available through Enterprise Ireland and we expect an audience of between 200-300 people.

6.5. Publications

6.5.1. *Fourth Level Ireland Brochure*

The IUA brochure for the seven universities *"4th Level Ireland – Your future Graduate and Postdoctoral Experience in Irish Universities"* was completed in time for the AAAS Science and Technology exhibition in San Francisco, 15th-22nd February. It will be distributed next at the Euro Posgrados Postgraduate Fair in Mexico in March and the NAFSA education exhibition in Minneapolis at the end of May 2007. The brochure is available for download from the IUA website and has been distributed to the Deans of Graduate Studies at each university for internal distribution. A more comprehensive edition will be compiled with the assistance of the new 4th Level Network Co-ordinator.

6.5.2 *Marie Curie Success Brochure*

Work has begun on a "***Marie Curie Success for Ireland***" brochure looking back over the last five years of funding successes achieved will be completed in advance of the National Launch of Marie Curie in FP7 in May 2007. The aim of this brochure is to encourage participation in FP7.

6.6. Bill Harris Presentation

To honour the efforts made by Dr. Bill Harris as Founding General Director of Science Foundation Ireland and to mark his contribution to Ireland's effort to put itself clearly on the world's research landscape, a formal presentation was made to him by the IUA on 26th February. The event, attended by university presidents, IUA staff and other guests took place in DCU, where Dr. Harris was presented with a framed scroll, produced by the communications department of the IUA and signed by the seven presidents.

7.   Quality Assurance

7.1. *IUQB Matters*

7.1.1 *IUQB Meetings*

Following the agreement of the IUQB Board at its meeting on 23rd October, 2006 to establish an IUQB Management Committee, the committee held its first meeting on 12th January, 2007 and a subsequent meeting was held on 16th February, 2007.

A meeting of the IUQB Board took place on 26th February 2007. At that meeting, the Board approved the draft proposals on the reserved powers of the Board and the delegated powers of the Management Committee. The next meeting of the IUQB Board is scheduled for 21st May, 2007.

7.1.2 *IUQB Budget 2007*

As indicated in the IUQB submission to the January IUA Review, due to the increased compliance workload on the office post incorporation, increased management of the sectoral

projects and commitments at international level, the proposal for the 2007 IUQB Budget will contain a request for an increase in IUQB staff from 4 (3.8 WTE) to 7 (6.5 WTE) persons.

This proposal was put to the IUQB Management Committee at its meeting on 12th January, 2007. The Management Committee requested the CEO to commission a study of the proposed IUQB structure and to obtain an independent evaluation of the appropriate pay levels for the identified positions. The CEO commissioned a consultancy firm to undertake this evaluation of staffing and pay levels. The job evaluation report on the IUQB Executive team was provided to the Management Committee at the Meeting on 16th February, 2007. The Report on the proposed structure for IUQB was presented to the Board at its meeting on 26th February, 2007. The Report concluded that the changes to the IUQB structure was justified by a combination of exiting pressures and developing workload, that the new staffing roles identified related clearly to major aspects of IUQB's work and considered that enough resource has to be provided in house to develop policy management national and international network and ensure that any outsourced activity is effectively managed.

In February 2007, IUQB was informed that the HEA had provisionally allocated a sum of €300,000 for IUQB funding in 2007. This represents an increase from €258,000 in 2006.

IUQB is in the process of having its first set of accounts prepared (for the period 26th February 2006 to 21st December 2006). A review report on staffing was also prepared which contains recommendations to regrade existing staff and employ new staff. This report was presented to the Board at its meeting of the 26th February 2007. As the new staffing levels have implications for the universities in terms of increased subscriptions for 2007, and as a number of Board members, including the serving university chief officers, were absent, it was agreed that all Board members be notified of the matter before advancing further.

The Board requested the CEO to prepare a draft budget for 2007 as soon as possible, with a number of different scenarios, ranging from no increase in staffing to the full requested increase, with an indication of the levels of costs involved and the levels of output that could be achieved in the different cases and to report back to the Management Committee, in advance of the next Board meeting on 21st May 2007. The cost of university subscriptions to IUQB will have to be calculated and submitted to IUA Council for approval. The meeting noted that the total cost of university subscriptions to IUQB in 2006 was €418,500.

7.1.3. *Review of IUQB by the HEA*
In December 2006, the HEA agreed to the request to commission a quality review of IUQB in 2007, so that IUQB can fulfil the requirements as an external quality assurance agency under Part 3 of the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (the Bergen standards).

The IUQB Executive prepared draft terms of reference for the review, in consultation with the HEA and ENQA and the draft terms of reference were considered both by the Management Committee and the full Board in February. An outline of the timescale for the review was presented at the Board meeting on 26 February 2007. The timescale indicates that the HEA would approved the terms of reference and appoint the external review group in May; that the self-assessment report would be finalised in time for the Board to approve it in September and a tentative time of mid-November was suggested for the review visit.

7.1.4. *Sectoral Project Activities*

A meeting of the project management group for the Institutional Research project took place on the 19th February 2007. The Institutional Research officers from NUIM and NUIG were also in attendance. The group reviewed the documentation, information and reports received to date. A draft outline for the chapters of the booklet of good practice was drawn up. It was also agreed that a national meeting to review an interim report (including a near completed draft of the booklet) should be held in the autumn. Subsequent to the meeting it was agreed that the 2007 IUQB Annual Conference would have Institutional Research as its theme. Preliminary dates for the conference are the 12/13th October 2007. The next meeting of the group takes place on the 23rd March 2007.

The Programme Manager met with Professor A. Hyland on the 7th March 2007 to review the documentation, information and reports received to date for the Quality Improvement in Teaching and Learning project. A draft outline for the key chapters of the booklet of good practice was drawn up. It was also proposed that a national meeting to review an interim report (including a near completed draft of the booklet) should be held in the autumn. Initial dates of the 9th/10th November, 2007 are proposed. The next meeting of the project management group is to take place in mid-April 2007.

A meeting of the project management group for the Mathematics, Teaching and Learning group took place on the 13th March 2007. The group reviewed the recent data collected from six of the seven Irish universities together with other documentation, information and reports received. A draft outline for the chapters of the booklet of good practice was prepared. Analysis of the data collected in now underway and writing has commenced on the chapters for the booklet. The next meeting of the project management group is to take place at the end of April 2007.

Sectoral Project Group Leaders
Mathematics, Teaching and Learning: Ann O'Shea (NUIM), David Wraith (NUIM), Don McQuillan, Teresa Lee (IUQB).
Strategic Planning in Academic Departments: John Davies (UK), Norma Ryan (UCC), Tony Carey (UCD), Teresa Lee (IUQB).
Quality Improvement in Teaching and Learning: Aine Hyland (Ex-UCC), Bettie Higgs (UCC), Teresa Lee (IUQB).

Institutional Research: David Redmond (NUIM), Tony Carey (UCD), Jim Gosling (NUIG), Tom Duff (DIT), Teresa Lee (IUQB).
Student Evaluation and Feedback Mechanisms in Quality Assurance: Teresa Lee (IUQB)

7.1.5. *IUQB Internationally*

The Programme manager, as a member of the pool of evaluators for the EUA Institutional Evaluation Programme, acted as secretary of the team that completed a review of one of the higher education institutions participating in the system review of higher education institutions in Portugal.

The CEO made an invited presentation to the 4th Annual Enhancement Themes Conference organised by QAA Scotland in Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh on 9th March 2007.

IUQB hosted visits by the senior management of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority on 8th February 2007.

7.1.6. *IUQB Publications*

The 2nd issue of *IUQB News* will be published in March 2007.

The second edition of *A Framework for Quality in Irish Universities* (first published by C.H.I.U. in 2003) is in advanced preparation. The document will be a joint IUA/IUQB publication. A meeting was held in NUIM on 20th February 2007 to discuss the latest draft of the document. The meeting was attended by representatives of all the universities and from IUA and IUQB. The document will be published before the summer, once it has been approved by IUA and IUQB.