IUA Review [06/3] for IUA Meetings
in DCU on 19th June, 2006.

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1. Research

1.1. National Research Plan 2007-2014

Latest reports are that the plan was considered by Government on 9th June, 2006 and that it is to be launched shortly.

1.2. Science Foundation Ireland

1.2.1. Fixed Term Work Act [see also Section 3.6]

IUA has agreed not to delay signing SFI contracts that involve salaried researchers on foot of assurances received from SFI.

1.2.2 SFI Draft Terms and Conditions for Research Grants

Science Foundation Ireland is proposing to make a number of revisions to its Terms and Conditions of Research Grants and has requested inputs and comments. The IUA received legal advise on the proposed changes and collated inputs from the Research Officers, Research Accountants, Finance Officers and AURIL Ireland (Directors of Technology Transfer). SFI Officers have confirmed that they will revert to us in the coming weeks.

1.2.3 SFI Proposed New Funding Scheme - Strategic Research Clusters

SFI is preparing a new programme, the "Strategic Research Cluster" (SRC) which will facilitate the "clustering" of PIs in areas with potential for significant industrial partnerships and strategic importance to Ireland. The universities, through the IUA Research Officer Group have been consulted and have raised a number of issues. IUA will be meeting with SFI on 16th June in open forum to agree changes to the programme details prior to launch. This is an excellent example of new schemes being introduced with stakeholder consultation.

1.3. European Research Policy

1.3.1. Researchers Charter and Code of Conduct for Recruitment

The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers[1] is being adopted and implemented in many European Countries. The Charter for Researchers addresses the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers and their employers or funding organisations. The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers aims to improve recruitment and to make selection procedures fairer and more transparent. Much of the charter and code simply reflects what is already practised in Irish universities.

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[1] http://europa.eu.int/eracareers/pdf/am509774CEE_EN_E4.pdf.

The IUA was engaged extensively and intensively in the development of the Code and Charter through consultation with national stakeholders in the universities, government agencies and other representative organisations (IBEC etc). A key role was played in re-drafting the text of the Code and Charter. However it has become apparent that there is a difficulty in the interpretation of language and this problem has been recognised despite the extensive work done in Ireland leading up to the Charter. Concerns have been raised on the part of HR departments relating to the implications for them in dealing with personnel. Although signing up to the Charter and Code is voluntary, organisations believe that they are making a legal commitment.

The IUA current objective is to ensure that the Charter and Code is not in conflict with national legislation and practice in our universities before IUA adopts it formally. To that end a gap analysis of the Charter and Code is being carried out with the national funding agencies and with reference to IUQB's National guidelines of good practice. The exercise will involve mapping the Code and Charter against existing guidelines, practice and legislation in Ireland with key stakeholders.

1.4.   EU Sixth Framework Programme
1.4.1.   FP6 Drawdown
The total funding to Ireland to-date from Framework Programme 6 is €163,956,145, with 74% of the total Irish figure attributable to the HE sector. The majority of Calls are now closed, with evaluation results pending.

1.4.2. Human Resources & Mobility Programme – Marie Curie
The Marie Curie Programme continues to be the most successful part of the Framework Programme for Ireland in relative terms, and the Irish draw-down from the programme is now over €50m representing 30% of the total. The recent evaluation results from the Transfer of Knowledge Programme indicate that Ireland has again taken a significant portion of the budget available. The UK had 21 proposals funded followed by Ireland with 19 (15 as coordinators plus 4 as partners), the Netherlands 11 and then Poland 9. This will mean that Ireland will take over 20% of the entire budget from this programme (at least €10m). These are not relative results they are absolutes and demonstrate the competitiveness of Irish universities across all disciplines. Final evaluation results are expected in July/August.

1.4.3. Forfás National Database on FP6 Contracts
Forfás is the agency charged with collection of data on Irish success in FP6. The IUA is seriously concerned with the quality of information since following a recent publication we have noticed serious discrepancies. The overall performance of Ireland and especially the universities is measured by this data and we must be satisfied that the information is accurate. IUA has written to the Department of Enterprise expressing concerns.

1.5. EU Seventh Framework Programme

1.5.1. FP7 Budget

Draft budget figures for FP7, compiled by the EC and endorsed by science ministers at an informal Competitiveness Council in late April, indicate that traditional collaborative research projects will suffer as new initiatives such as the European Research Council and Joint Technology Initiatives are ramped up. A detailed breakdown shows that all research themes in the Cooperation Programme will start out in 2007 with less funds than 2006.

1.5.2. National Support Structure for FP7

The Forfás Board has recommended a new national support structure for FP7 that will provide a dedicated service to applicants. This is much in line with the IUA recommendations to DETE/Forfás. However the IUA is concerned about the implementation of the report's recommendations.

The report recommends that the new core unit to support FP7 should be housed in an existing agency. The IUA would be very concerned if this simply means assigning it without any clear selection and evaluation process. The IUA has provided full support for researchers accessing the Marie Curie Programme and would contend that this is the most successful service in FP6. Marie Curie funding now dominates both indigenous and multinational industry funding. The IUA expects that this level of support and success must be replicated across all of FP7. For this reason the IUA proposed that the running of the FP7 support unit should go out to tender and both public and private organisations could bid for the contract.

There is no recognition of existing national expertise in this model. For example, within the universities the Research Officers, Research Accountants and AURIL Ireland collectively have greater expertise than all of the current national delegates and NCP's. This expertise must be harnessed for the national good in FP7. Such groups should be recognised and become explicit members of the National Support Services (NSS) with appropriate resourcing. They would bring great added value to the NSS.

IUA has followed up with the Department of Enterprise on these issue however, the indications are that the FP7 Support Unit will be placed in Enterprise Ireland with very limited resources.

1.5.3. Rules for Participation in FP7

The IUA is involved in ongoing consultation on the Rules for Participation in FP7. The "additional cost model" (AC) for the reimbursement of the costs of participants in EU FP projects has been removed. The issue currently under negotiation is the level of overheads which the EC will adopt as a "flat rate". IUA Executive is working closely with DETE and Padraig O'Conaill, Attaché at the Perm Rep to the EU, who has been representing the universities' significant concerns in the ongoing negotiations on this issue. There is a pressing

need, in light of this change, for the university sector to move to a Full Economic Cost (FEC) accounting system for research. Leverage of alternative funding for research is seen by Government as an essential part of the National Research Plan. As the Framework Programme is the universities' only substantial non-exchequer source of research funding, it is essential that they maximise their potential draw-down from this source. The move to a FEC system is addressed under Paragraph 2.1.1 on the Strategic Innovation Fund.

1.5.4. *European Research Council*
IUA has secured agreement from Prof Fotis Kafatos (Chair) for the ERC Scientific Council to meet in the IUA in 2007. As we have no national representative on the Council this will be an excellent opportunity for the universities to demonstrate success in research. The IUA is also targeting this coming September as the date for a national conference on the ERC.

1.5.5. *European Institute of Technology (EIT)*
Following a wide-ranging consultation of stakeholders and Member States, the Commission has adopted a new Communication fleshing out its plan for the establishment of a European Institute of Technology (EIT)[2]. The EC claim that much progress has been made since the Spring European Council (March 2006) invited the Commission to continue developing its proposal to create a European Institute of Technology - a flagship project for excellence in higher education, research and innovation. This Communication clarifies the EC proposal and identifies issues that must be addressed next. The aim is to focus the ongoing consultation and debate in the coming months and prepare a formal proposal towards the end of the year.

The EIT is part of the Commission's strategy to create a thriving and dynamic environment for research, education and innovation. The EC claim that the EIT will be more than simply an operator in education, research and innovation; it will be a reference model for excellence at the European level. The IUA VPDOR Group remains deeply skeptical of this approach as outlined in the April review.   http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eit/index_en.html

1.6. *Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences:*
The IUA wrote to IRCHSS to indicate that the universities can no longer subsidise the fees of PhD students funded by the Council. Currently all other funding agencies do cover PhD fees and IRCHSS is the exception. The VP/Deans of Research will meet the Council's Executive Committee to discuss this and the Fixed Term Work Act.

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[2] http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eit/index_en.html

1.7. Co-ordination of Research Audits

As reported in the April IUA Review the IUA had written to the Chair of the Standing Committee of Research Funding Bodies seeking a meeting to discuss the possibility of agreeing a co-ordinated approach to research audits by funding agencies. Representatives from the IUA were subsequently invited to and attended the standing committee's meeting on Wednesday 7th June in relation to this issue.

The Standing Committee welcomed the proposal and agreed to give the matter due consideration. They asked that a formal proposal be submitted. They noted that such a proposal would have to be approved by audit committees and other relevant stakeholders of each funding agency. It was agreed that the IUA would submit a formal proposal in relation to this.

1.8 Irish Researcher Mobility Office and Web Portal

The Research Job Opportunities function on the researchcareersireland.com portal is in the final phase of development and will be launched at the end of June. This will result in a centralized national website which allows research job advertising for all research active organizations, academia and industry. Universities will soon be able to upload and advertise their research job opportunities *free of charge* both nationally and in Europe on *Europa* - the portal site of the European Union (http://europa.eu.int/) via the centralized national website.

Training sessions will be rolled out through the mobility network to ensure that all key personnel in the universities avail of the free service to advertise research opportunities. IOT's and research active organisations will also be targeted to ensure that all research vacancies and opportunities are showcased on a national, European and International scale

Industry Focused Initiatives

Following on from a series of workshops organised by the Irish and the Dutch Project Co-ordinators in The Hague and Baden, the mobility office hosted the ERA-MORE[3] (European Network of Mobility Centres) Industry Involvement workshop in May. Ireland has a central role in industry involvement, participation and networking and is very active in this area and this is recognised by the European Commission. The ERA-MORE 'bridgehead' organisations regularly refer to Ireland's experience – and look for expertise in how we have promoted to Industry and in particular Industry agencies and bodies, the use of industry agencies in spreading the work of ERA-MORE and how to get industry 'on side'. A key task for the mobility office is working with Irish SMEs undertaking research and the provision of specific support and assistance to this target group and the international researchers they employ, on mobility issues. Specific industry sectors have and will be identified and workshops are delivered to provide proximal assistance to those SMEs and their researchers.

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[3] http://www.europa.eu.int/eracareers/index_en.cfm?l1=4

Members from the European Commission, Netherlands, France, Belgium, Greece, Finland and Slovenia participated in the Industry Workshop in Dublin. Conor Long from expertiseireland.com and Martin Hynes IRCSET were invited to present their experiences and involvement with Industry. The workshop focused on best ways to target Industry, practical tools such as information packs, presentations and fact sheets for the entire mobility network, and using the mobility portals as a virtual marketplace for researchers

1.9. *expertiseireland.com*

Athlone Institute of Technology has begun contributing expert profiles to the expertiseireland.com portal, bringing the total number of profiles to almost 5000. The breakdown is as follows:

University of Dublin, Trinity College	744
University College Dublin	658
Dublin Institute of Technology	654
University of Ulster	613
Dublin City University	487
University College Cork	458
Queen's University Belfast	409
National University of Ireland, Galway	404
University of Limerick	267
National University of Ireland, Maynooth	260
Athlone Institute of Technology	22
Institute of Technology, Tallaght	4

There is a considerable time being invested with the other IT's to facilitate their contribution of profiles.

The Technology Transfer section of the portal has been expanded to include some additional fields which will allow us to take the opportunities available on the Enterprise Ireland's Biotechnology Directorate site, from the Universities and post them on the portal. The comparison of the annual statistics is shown in the table below:

Comparison of the average annual statistics for year ending
May 2005 vs year ending May 2006

	2005	**2006**	**% Change**
Average duration per visit	28	278	892%
# Page Impressions	238,847	344,535	44.25%
# Searches	21,316	28,434	33.4%
# Visits	22,723	35,297	55.3%
News articles viewed	2,015	2,340	16.1%
# Profiles accessed	24,920	43,538	74.7%

1.10. Technology Transfer

An invitation for proposals on Strengthening Technology Transfer Offices in Higher Education Institutions has been issued by Enterprise Ireland.

The objective of the invitation for proposals is stated to be to increase the level and quality of IP transferred from research in HEIs and to facilitate the development of high quality and effective systems and policies to ensure that the IP is identified, protected and transferred, where possible, into companies in Ireland. The call is given to single institutions or to collaborations between institutions, and proposals must be received by Enterprise Ireland on or before 28th July, 2006. It is also intended that there will be further calls early in 2007 and also 2008.

2. University Reform
2.1. Sectoral Position
2.1.1. Strategic Innovation Fund

HEA proposals for a scheme are currently being considered by DES and the Department of Finance. The SIF will allocate €300m over 5 years for proposals in a range of areas. The IUA has identified, as contained in the Fourth Level Ireland proposal, three general areas: Third level, Fourth level, and Collaborative projects. We anticipate a call for proposals in mid-June and the IUA Council has agreed that no time is lost in preparing sectoral proposals. The IUA established a group, chaired by Paddy Teahon to focus on the general area of Management Information Systems (MIS). The other members of the MIS Group are: Clive Williams (TCD), Diarmuid Collins (UCC), Frank Soughley (DCU), John O'Brien (UL), Kieran Loftus (NUIG), Michael O'Malley (NUIM), Sean O'Farrell (NUIG), Tony Carey (UCD).

The group held its first meeting on Tuesday 16th May and a number of clear projects were identified to be pursed by sub-groups. These were - the move to full economic costing by the universities; establishing digital learning repositories; and open access to source publications by researchers in the universities. Work is now underway to develop proposals for these areas. A

working group on Full Economic Costing (FEC) has been established and is actively developing a proposal.

A separate IUA Group was established to undertake preparatory work on collaborative HR proposals relating to advancing the 3rd and 4th Level reform agenda and it has identified a number of areas for potential projects.

IUQB is undertaking preparatory work on new areas for collaborative QA proposals for discussion with IUA.

2.1.2. *Graduate Schools*

The HEA has produced a document as output for the graduate education forum on 28th Feb – 1st Mar 2006.   The conclusions are based principally on those that emerged from the EUA seminar Doctoral Programmes for the European Knowledge Society (Salzburg 3 – 5 February 2005). While the EUA conclusions have 10 principles, there are 14 in the HEA document and they have omitted one relating to doctoral students. It is interesting to note that while they have taken on board many of the issues proposed in Fourth Level Ireland, they still do not use this terminology. Having examined the list in detail that they have taken into account many of the issues raised in the IUAS document that emerged from the IUA group work on graduate schools. In addition the extra 11, 13 and 14 principles all come directly from the IUA graduate school document. Two closely related issues they have left open for further discussion are on doctoral candidates as early stage researchers and the need for the development of career structures for researchers.

2.2. *National Development Plan*

The IUA has engaged Professor Colm Harmon, Geary Institute, UCD, to prepare a paper on the economic impact of higher education as an input from the IUA to preparations of the National Development Plan. The document on a sectoral infrastructure investment programme, being prepared by Dr. Tom Higgins, will also form part of an IUA submission.

2.3. *Proposed Amendment of Universities Act 1997*

The main purpose of the **Institutes of Technology Bill 2006** is to make the necessary legislative provisions for transferring funding responsibility for the IOTs from DES to the HEA.

The Bill also provides for what is described in the accompanying Explanatory Memorandum as a technical amendment of the Universities Act 1997 to delete the reference to "accounting officer" in Section 24 and by adding similar provisions to the Fourth Schedule in relation to the accountability to the Dáil and Oireachtas of the Chief Officer as those included in respect of Directors of IOTs in Section 26 of the IoT Bill.

Text of the Amendment
Section 53 of the Institutes of Technology Bill provides as follows:

The Universities Act 1997 is amended—

(a) in section 24—

(i) in subsection (1), by deleting ", and the person so appointed shall be the accounting officer for the university", and

(ii) by deleting subsection (2), and

(b) in the Fourth Schedule, by adding after paragraph 7 the following:

"8. A chief officer shall, whenever required to do so by the Committee of Dáil Éireann established under the Standing Orders of Dáil Éireann to examine and report to Dáil Éireann on the appropriation accounts and reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General, give evidence to that Committee on—

(a) the regularity and propriety of the transactions recorded or required to be recorded in any book or other record of account subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General that the university is required by this Act to prepare,

(b) the economy and efficiency of the university in the use of its resources,

(c) the systems, procedures and practices employed by the university for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of its operations, and

(d) any matter affecting the university referred to in a special report of the Comptroller and Auditor General under section 11(2) of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993 or in any other report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (in so far as it relates to a matter specified in subparagraph (a), (b) or (c)) that is laid before Dáil Éireann.

9. A chief officer, if required under paragraph 8 to give evidence, shall not question or express an opinion on the merits of any policy of the Government or a Minister of the Government or on the merits of the objectives of such a policy.

10. From time to time and whenever so requested, a chief officer shall account for the performance of the university's functions to a Committee of one or both Houses of the Oireachtas and shall have regard to any recommendations of such Committee relevant to these functions.".

Matter Raised with DES and Minister

Advance notice of a technical amendment to delete the term "accounting officer" was conveyed to the IUA by the DES but no information prior to the publication of the Bill was provided to the IUA about the amendment proposed to the Fourth Schedule of the Universities Act 1997.

When IUA became aware of the proposed amendment to the Fourth Schedule the Director raised concerns with the DES. The information received in response was that the new paragraphs 8, 9 and 10 of the Fourth Schedule were merely intended to bring the regulations governing the reporting and the giving of evidence to the PAC by university heads into line with requirements on all other chief officers or executives of bodies required to account to the PAC.

Particular concern was then raised with the Minister's Policy Advisor about the terms of paragraph 9 which could be interpreted as an attempt to prevent university heads being critical of government policies and actions which could have detrimentally affected the operation and funding of universities and that university heads should not be cast in the same light as departmental secretary generals who by the nature of their posts may not publicly criticise government policy.

He was asked to bring an IUA request to have the proposed new paragraph 8 deleted to the Minister's attention.

Minister's Response

The IUA Director was informed on 12th June that the Minister was not prepared to propose a deletion. The Minister had consulted with the legislation experts who are adamant, and she is in agreement with them, that the wording proposed is required to ensure that the proceedings of the PAC focus exclusively on the accountability of the chief officers reporting to, or appearing before, the PAC. In this regard the same format of words is being applied to the Chief Executives of the NQAI, HETAC and FETAC in the IOT Bill.

Further Action Proposed

The Bill will be taken at Committee Stage in the Dáil on Thursday 15th June, 2006. It is understood that the Fine Gael Education and Science Spokesperson has submitted a proposed amendment seeking to have the relevant similar provision in the Bill as it relates to the IOTs deleted

It is proposed that a request be sent to the Education and Science Spokespersons of the opposition parties requesting them to table an amendment seeking the deletion of the proposed paragraph 8 of Section 53 of the Institutes of Technology Bill.

3. *Funding*

3.1. *Current Funding 2005/2006*

The University Chief Finance Officers Group made a submission to the HEA in respect of the required increase in tuition fees for 2006/07 noting that the increase needed to cover the cost of known unavoidable cost increases was in the region of 8.4%.

3.2. *Capital Funding*

Sectoral Infrastructure Investment Programme

Following the submission of the priority lists of capital projects to the DES Secretary General in March the Council agreed the need for the purposes of the National Development Plan submission to present the projects as a sectoral infrastructural investment programme and agreed that the IUA engage Dr. Tom Higgins as an external consultant to undertake this task.

As part of this process Dr. Higgins is currently meeting with relevant officers from universities to discuss university infrastructure requirements and priorities. It is anticipated that the project would be completed within the coming weeks.

Revised Capital Appraisal Guidelines

The Third Level Building Unit of the DES wrote to the IUA in April in relation to the revised capital appraisal guidelines that were published by the Department of Finance in February 2005. These guidelines should be complied with in respect of all future applications for capital funding. In addition universities are also required to comply with further measures in relation to (a) public procurement and capital appraisal matters and (b) ICT projects and consultancies. The HEA also wrote to university Presidents/Provost seeking confirmation that necessary arrangements have been put in place to ensure compliance with these requirements.

3.3. *Funding Allocation Model*

As reported previously it was agreed that the Registrar's and Finance Officers would examine issues arising from the HEA's recurrent funding allocation mechanism in relation to student numbers and financial data respectively with a view to ensuring that there were clear and consistent rules and definitions in respect of all data inputs to the mechanism.

The Registrar's have agreed a sectoral position and made a number of proposals to the HEA in this regard. The HEA has accepted a significant number of these proposals and outstanding issues include:

- Students in Adult education, distance education, outreach education. These are currently still excluded from the allocation model.
- students on programmes which are below Level 8 but which carry credits leading to exemptions in a Level 8 programme. These likewise continue to be excluded from the model. It is therefore vital that individual universities convey their student data in these

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categories to the HEA so that the necessary modelling and other preparatory work can be undertaken with a view to including these groups as soon as possible.

- IUA has been requested to put forward a proposal to the HEA regarding the issue of EU/non-EU fees for international students already resident in Ireland and for international post-graduate students.

A finance working group has also made a number of recommendations in relation to the financial inputs to the model and these have been discussed with the HEA. A formal proposal is in the process of being finalised and will be issued to the HEA in due course. The group has also considered the impact of harmonising undergraduate tuition fees and will be liaising with the HEA in relation to this matter.

3.4. Pension Issues

The HEA wrote to university Presidents/Provost on 24th May 2006 conveying the views of the Department of Education and Science and of the Department of Finance that the new model superannuation schemes would operate on a pay-as-you-go basis and detailing the arrangements for operation of same. The letter also set out the proposed arrangements in relation to the pension treatment of Fixed Term Workers.

The proposal from DES/DoF is broadly welcomed by the sector although there remain a number of further issues to be addressed. It was agreed that a sectoral response would be issued to the HEA.

3.5. Fixed Term Work Act

Following instructions from SFI to universities to exclude costs relating to the Fixed Term Work Act from budgets relating to the Frontiers Programme and subsequent discussions between the IUA and SFI it was agreed that a strong sectoral response was required to this issue. Consequently the IUA President wrote to SFI indicating that due to financial constraints universities would be delaying the signing of further contracts with SFI until the issue of the funding of costs for FTWA had been satisfactorily resolved. Arising from this sectoral stance SFI have now committed to meeting its financial obligations with respect of the FTWA in respect of all new grants awarded from 1 January 2006 once clarification has been obtained in respect of the nature of the pension schemes to be put in place.

As noted under 3.5 above the DES and DoF have written to universities in relation to pension arrangements for fixed-term employees. They have indicated that fixed-term employees with rights under the Act should be given access to the defined benefit scheme that a comparable permanent employee appointed on the same date would have.

3.6. Nursing – Transfer of Midwifery and Children's Nursing Education to Third Level

Discussions with the HSE and Department of Health & Children in respect of the transfer of midwifery and children's nursing to the third level sector have been on-going. A transfer agreement has been finalised and circulated to relevant staff. The target date for final signed transfer agreements is 7th July 2006. The Undergraduate programmes will transfer in September 2006 and funding has now been provided to universities to prepare for this.

A number of issues remain unresolved in respect of the transfer of post-registration courses and in particular the fees for such courses. It is proposed that the transfer of post-registration midwifery courses will be effective from September 2007 and post-registration children's nursing will transfer in September 2006. The IUA Working Group will continue to liaise with the HSE and DoHC in relation to the outstanding issues in respect of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

4.   HEA

4.1. Code of Practice for the Governance of Third Level Institutions

As reported previously a HEA working group under the chairmanship of Mr. Dermot Quigley has been set up to develop a joint HEA/IUA Framework for the Governance of Universities. The group has met on a number of occasions and the HEA has requested that a delegation from the IUA comprising representatives of Secretary's and Finance Officers would attend the next meeting of the group on 16th June 2006.

4.2   Consolidated Financial Statements

The University Chief Finance Officers Group has committed to being in a position to publish consolidated financial statements in respect of the 2002/03 and 2003/04 academic years by the end of June 2006.

4.3. Expert Group on Entry Mechanisms to Medical Education

The Minister for Education and Science announced the establishment of an Expert Group on Entry Mechanisms to Medical Education to advance the recommendations of the Fottrell Report for a new approach to the selection of students for entry to undergraduate and graduate medical programmes

The Chair of the Group, Mr. John Hayden, wrote to the University Heads and the RCSI seeking co-operation giving notice that the Group would be shortly requesting submissions to enable it report to the Minister before September 2006. On 9th June, 2006 the Expert Group again wrote to the University Heads formally requesting a single submission from the university sector by 15th July, 2006 and setting out the issues which the Expert Group wished to address.

4.4. *Sectoral Collaboration / Recruitment Practices*

The HEA wrote to University Heads on 26th May, 2006 on issues relating to recruitment practices by Universities seeking a response from the IUA by 7th July, 2006 to concerns raised. The IUA Executive had been preparing a working document on a collaboration protocol which included the issue of staff recruitment and mobility. The draft document was considered by the Council at its meeting on 9th June, 2006 and is being redrafted to take account of issues raised in discussion.

5. Remuneration Reviews

5.1. *Professors*

The Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Sector has invited the IUA to make a submission on the review of professors' remuneration that the Body has been requested by the Department of Finance to carry out with the agreement of the relevant trade unions.

The IUA has been invited to make a submission as the sectoral body representing the professors' employers and is expected to put forward a "management" perspective.

The expectation is that the universities will articulate a clear strategic view on the role of professors in the context of the sector's objectives to create 4th Level and reform of 3rd Level. Professors, as a key academic and research grade in the universities, would be anticipated to be pivotal to the achievement of the objectives.

The IUA has convened a Working Group of university nominees to prepare the IUA submission and has engaged a consultant, Sean O'Driscoll, Athrú Consulting to assist in the task.

5.2. *Benchmarking*

Mr. Brian Cowen, TD, Minister for Finance, announced on 13th January, 2006 the formal establishment of the Public Service Benchmarking Body as provided for in the second public service agreement under Sustaining Progress (SP) to undertake a fundamental examination of the pay of public service employees vis-à-vis the private sector.

The Public Service Benchmarking Body has been asked to examine the pay and jobs of specific grades and to produce a report and recommendations on the pay rates of these grades in the second half of 2007. In the case of universities, the grades are listed by the Benchmarking Body as follows:-

Assistant/Junior/ Below Bar Lecturer, (College) Lecturer, Statutory/Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor in the HEA Sector excluding Associate Professor NUI Galway
Technician Grades in the HEA Sector

Submissions have been requested by 7th July, 2006.

There is need to address the unsatisfactory recommendations in the joint Benchmarking Body Report in the Body's last report in respect of the academic grades listed. The Human Resource Officers have proposed that the IUA co-ordinated the university sector submission to the Benchmarking Body with the assistance of a consultant.

5.3. *Common Contract for Hospital Consultants*
The Council of Deans of Faculties with Medical Schools in Ireland has written to the IUA concerning negotiations between the Irish Hospital Consultants Association, the Irish Medical Organisation and the Department of Health and Children regarding a new contract for hospital consultants. The Deans are concerned that the Irish Universities should be formally represented in the negotiations because Academic Consultants are employed by universities. They also consider it critical that the common contract has an academic component and that this should be sought by the universities. The matter has been raised with the HEA, DES and DoHC.

6. Access

6.1. *Evaluation of Access Programmes*
A very preliminary overview of results of the HEA's evaluation of access programmes in all universities and IoTs was made by the HEA consultant, Cynthia Deane of Options Consulting, to IUA Registrars on 10th April, 2006. Further presentations have since been made to various groups, including to the HEA's access advisory group on 26th April, 2006 and to a wide group of access practitioners on 3rd May, 2006. These presentations focused on emerging examples of good practice. Conclusions and recommendations arising from the evaluation are awaited.

6.2. *Higher Education Access Route*
A draft proposal has been prepared by the IUA Access Officers Group for a revised Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) programme for socio-economically disadvantaged students, and was presented to IUA Registrars on 10th April, 2006. The proposal has since been revised and discussed with IUA admissions officers. A final proposal is expected for IUA Registrars by 19th June, 2006.

It has been suggested that IUA access officers should publish a brief report on the first years of the HEAR programme, highlighting the many successes of this and the lessons learned in terms of policies and practice.

6.3. *Access Students/Revised HEA Funding Mechanism*

Following a consultative process and feedback by the IUA, the HEA wrote to all Universities and to other publicly funded HEIs on 3rd May, 2006 outlining its requirements regarding data gathering on under-represented students, as a basis for the new funding arrangements concerning these students. This letter did not appear to take into account comments already made by IUA and other groups. A collective response was sent by IUA to the HEA on 18th May, 2006 and followed up by a meeting with the HEA on 1st June, 2006. It became apparent at this meeting that the HEA had not thought through sufficiently the registration process (paper and online), the coding process for socio-economic data, or the student records process within universities, and there was general agreement that the system as set out in the HEA letter of 3rd May, 2006 would not work in the short term. The outcomes of this meeting were:

- HEA to agree internally about scope of exercise: first year entrants only?; all undergraduate students?; only EU undergraduate students?, with or without mature students?, etc.
- HEA to see how the section on disability data could be linked to existing CAO questions re disability
- HEA to explore options for simplifying the socio-economic data questions
- HEA to agree which data fields should be mandatory, and which not.
- HEA to propose a modified system which has a chance of working, possibly on a pilot basis, in September 2006.

7. Internationalisation

7.1. *Sectoral Collaboration*

Following the publication of the IUA international brochure in April 2006, work continued regarding the positioning of Irish universities both at home and abroad with regard to international issues. A letter was sent to DES outlining IUA's position on the proposed new educational promotion body "Education Ireland", as well as a series of observations and suggestions regarding the "international register" maintained by DES. A detailed response was also made to the Dept of Justice, Equality and Law Reform regarding student visas. Dialogue with both Departments has continued since, and meetings are being arranged.

7.2 *Enterprise Ireland*

Major difficulties arose prior to the Enterprise Ireland higher education mission to India at the end of April 2006, due to the fact that the Indian Embassy was unsatisfied with the response of the Irish authorities to reports that Indian students have been defrauded in 2004-05 by the a private Irish business school. A series of commitments had been made by the Irish authorities following that case, not all of which had been followed up fully. As it had warned it would, the Indian Embassy therefore withheld the issuing of visas until a further compromise agreement was negotiated. This was reached the day before departure for India. IUA has since been

exploring with the various actors involved the consequences of those agreements and what this should mean for future Irish higher education missions.

7.3   NAFSA - May 21st -26th 2006, Montreal, Canada

IUA universities took part in the annual NAFSA conference in Montreal in May 2006, for the first time under an IUA banner. A follow-up meeting is being organised so that this experience can be learnt from and built into future events. *[See Par 9 – Communications].*

7.4.   European Baccalaureat

A letter and memorandum concerning university admissions procedures for students holding the European Baccalaureat was sent in April by a concerned group of Irish parents to all universities, IUA, and to Minister Hanafin. IUA admissions officers have been asked to draft a response to this, and a first meeting hosted by NUI was organised on 29 May to prepare this. Detailed statistics have been sought and obtained from both the CAO and the European Baccalaureat governing body, and will inform a collective IUA response.

7.5   Developments in Other Countries
7.5.1 United Kingdom

UK's Prime Minister Tony Blair recently announced ambitious plans to attract an additional 100,000 international students to the country by 2011 as part of the second phase of an earlier, successful recruitment drive. Under the predeceasing plan, the UK set a target of increasing the number of foreign students by 75,000 between 1999 and 2005, and exceeded that goal by almost 50%. With nearly £27 million (US$48 million) secured in funding over the next two years, the new Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI) for International Education proves broader in scope and more ambitious in aim. The strategy extends the notion of 'international' beyond simply generating revenue from student mobility, to focus on solidifying the long-term reputation and standing of UK international education provided both within the country and overseas. Emphasis is placed on ensuring the quality of the student experience and establishing partnerships between UK institutions and those abroad. This announcement comes in light of a number of recent initiatives designed to enhance the UK's competitiveness in the international arena, most notably the new £17 million (US$30.3 million) India/UK Research and Education Initiative and the £2 million (US$3.6 million) UK-China Partnership Scheme.

7.5.2 Netherlands

The Observatory of Borderless and Higher Education has reported that the Netherlands recently implemented a code of conduct affecting international higher education students. Dutch institutions are now required to offer information and advice in English for all international post-graduate programmes, and faculty in these must be able to communicate with students in English. The code of conduct formalises what has generally been marketed as the Netherlands' chief competitive advantage, namely its wide range of international programmes taught in English. Few other countries have implemented a national code of conduct for students, so this

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new initiative might enhance the position in the higher education market. The report provides information on how the country currently ranks as a provider of international education and the strategies it now has in place.

7.5.3 *Malaysia*
The Observatory of Borderless and Higher Education reports that a number of significant higher education developments have emerged in Malaysia, pointing to the government's continued commitment to curbing high study abroad rates, increasing domestic opportunities and attracting more   international students to the country. Recent initiatives include substantial investment in higher education through the government's latest development plan for 2006-2010, the imminent launch of a new quality assurance agency covering both private and public providers, and a new government endorsed portal for students wishing to study in non-public institutions. The recent relaxation of the nation's regulations on provision to be offered in the Malay language, coupled with the launch of a new online admissions system for international students, also reflects the country's strategic efforts to become a major destination for foreign students. In contrast to some other countries where private provision to a large extent has grown outside of a legal framework, recent developments also reflect Malaysia's efforts to utilise and direct private initiative from the outset. This article aims to provide an overview of the latest higher education developments in Malaysia and assess their potential implications on the government's growing efforts to position the country as a regional education hub.

8.   National Framework of Qualifications
8.1.   *Placement of Awards within the Framework*
Following the December 2005 IUA / NQAI agreement on the process for placing minor, special purpose and supplemental university awards on the National Framework of Qualifications, and the follow-up meeting on 13 April 2006 between IUA and NQAI regarding this process, each university is now responsible for ensuring that these awards are processed as agreed and the results conveyed in an agreed format to the NQAI. The NQAI has written to each university outlining this.

Following a lengthy and helpful consultative process, the NQAI has established a set of draft Policies on the Inclusion in, or Alignment with, the National Framework of Qualifications of the Awards of Certain Awarding Bodies, including professional bodies and awarding bodies domiciled outside the State. A briefing session was organised on 24th May 2006, and included large numbers of such interested bodies.

8.2. *Access, Transfer and Progression*

A finalised version of the report by McIver Consulting on "transfer and progression into undergraduate programmes leading to university awards" was prepared in April 2006 and will be considered by IUA Registrars on 19 June. The focus of the report is on entry into honours bachelor degree programmes in the university sector through transfer from HETAC awards, through progression from FETAC or equivalent awards, and entry from UK further education and higher education awards. The report is expected to provide considerable assistance to IUA universities in establishing guidelines and frameworks for such transfer and progression.

9.   IUA Communications / Events

9.1.   *International*

NAFSA - May 21st -26th 2006, Montreal, Canada : The IUA Communications Manager attended this event to gather information on how the Irish universities are represented, to photograph and gather materials from competing international universities and to assist in the smooth running of the Education Ireland Stand with specific emphasis on the University Section.

The event, the largest and most significant networking and education event in North America, was hailed a great success with a record attendance of over 7000 delegates.

Mary Robinson was invited to give the plenary address which was sponsored by Education Ireland. The education Ireland CD, containing information on the 7 universities was distributed to over 4000 people at the plenary session. Mrs. Robinson visited the Irish stand after the address accompanied by the Irish Ambassador to Canada, H.E Martin Burke. She later gave a welcome speech to a full house at the Irish Reception.

The Education Ireland Stand was impressive and it ranked amongst the best designed at NAFSA this year. A revised version of the new joint International brochure was also distributed at the event with left-over copies delivered to the Irish Canadian Studies Foundation at Concordia University.

The International Officers will meet with the IUA in June to discuss the event and possible improvements for next year. Recommendations arising from this meeting will then be passed to the general post-NAFSA meeting held by Education Ireland with the Universities, IOT's and private colleges.

IUA International Brochure **:** The joint international brochure produced by the IUA will be translated into Chinese and distributed through the Enterprise Ireland network. The success of this translation will be monitored and other translations (Indian, Japanese etc) will be considered in the future.

Joint Display Equipment for NACAC **:** The IUA will produce an event background for the seven universities. It will be used initially at the NACAC exhibition in Pittsburgh in October and will be stored centrally by the IUA for use by the universities at future events.

9.2. *Events*
Preparatory work has begun on 3 major IUA events for Summer/Autumn

IUA Forum on Marie Curie FP7 Programme : National Groupings will be established and briefed on the upcoming FP7 programme for Marie Curie Funding. The forum will take place in the IUA in late July and will involve the expert input of the Deans of Research, Research Officers, researchers, Finance, Legal and representatives from funding bodies.

Introduction to the new European Research Council : The ERC will play a major role in the Seventh Framework Programme. The IUA will provide an opportunity for Irish researchers to meet and interact with members of this Council in advance of the first call for FP7. This event will take place in mid September.

IUA Humanities/ Social Sciences Conference 2006 : The IUA in collaboration with IRCHSS is planning to hold a conference on Humanities and Social Sciences in late October. The IUA will convene a steering group from across the 7 universities including representatives from IRCHSS, SFI and the HEA.

9.3. *Publications*
The proceedings of three major conferences organised by the IUA in 2005 have just been published with an overview of all three conferences with regard to their place in the National Development Plan written by Dr. Conor O'Carroll. The proceedings will be distributed as a set to those who attended the conference and other university and industry contacts.

9.4. *IUA Newsletter*
Text for the first IUA newsletter has been drafted and artwork is in development. We expect the first issue to be circulated in July. We will begin with a bi-monthly edition and work towards a monthly circulation. The Newsletter will feature items from all of the IUA core activities, including research, finance, international affairs, Marie Curie, Researcher Mobility Office Ireland and expertiseireland.com. Dates and details for Irish and European education and research events will be a regular feature.

10. European Developments
10.1. *Bologna Process*
As a consultative member in the Bologna Process, EUA is involved both in the Bologna Follow-up Group, which meets every six months, and as a member of working groups looking

into issues as diverse as national stocktaking on the implementation of the reform process , the next steps in relation to the European Qualifications Framework - both following-up decisions taken in Bergen - and new areas, such as the so-called 'External Dimension' of the Bologna Process, the 'Social Dimension' which includes current developments in relation to data on mobility, and finally the portability of grants and loans across the Bologna countries.

The results of the work of these groups will feed the preparation of the next Communiqué for the May 2007 London Ministerial meeting together with reports from (1) the 'E4' group (ENQA with EUA, ESIB and EURASHE) on the follow up of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area and (2) EUA on next steps in relation to doctoral programmes. It is EUA's role in all of these groups to represent the point of view of universities.

In addition, EUA is also preparing:

- *The next TRENDS report "Trends in Higher Education in Europe":* Based on the analysis of more than 900 responses from higher education institutions to questionnaires sent at the beginning of this year together with site visits, the report will provide essential information on the current state of implementation from an institutional perspective and complement the national reports presented by governments.
- *A Follow-up report on doctoral programmes in Europe:* Following the mandate given to EUA in Bergen to follow up its work on this issue, the Association is working with the Austrian and French governments to further explore the recommendations formulated in 2005. A Bologna Seminar open to EUA members will be organised on 7-9 December in Nice, France.
- *Declaration of European Universities:* Based on discussions to be held in Lisbon during EUA's convention in March 2007, the declaration will outline higher education institutions' main priorities and positions for the London Summit.

Various projects led by EUA are also of importance in the context of the Bologna Process implementation: organisation of a Quality Assurance Forum on 23-25 November; coordination and training of Bologna promoters on behalf of the European Commission; publication of a Bologna Handbook; fostering creativity in universities through university governance; development of a European Masters evaluation methodology; supporting universities in developing an internal quality culture; studying higher education funding issues; and consolidating cooperation with North-American and Latin American partners in order to promote a better understanding of the undergoing reform process.

10.2   ***Public European Commission Consultation on Knowledge Transfer in Europe***
Universities, as the main producers of knowledge, are key stakeholders in knowledge transfer. DG Research is conducting a public consultation to detect the needs of the stakeholders in university-industry cooperation in Europe and draw possible actions to foster and strengthen it. This consultation is an opportunity for universities to have an impact on a Communication on knowledge transfer that the EC is planning to release towards the end of 2006. Universities are encouraged to respond and contribute with their views. The consultation is open until 19 July 2006.

10.3   ***Delivering on the Modernisation Agenda for Universities***
The European Commission issued a paper which outlined major changes to be made to Europe's universities if the higher education sector is to play its part in helping the region fulfilling the Lisbon Strategy's goal of becoming "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy by 2010". Nine key areas for reform are identified, including university funding models, improved student and staff mobility and increased internationalisation. The paper clearly indicates where the Commission's interests and its funding and support mechanisms for higher education will lie.

11.   IUQB

11.1   ***IUQB Events***
IUQB launched its new corporate identity at a reception in the IUQB offices on Lower Mount St. The second of the IUQB good practice guides on '*Good Practice in the Organisation of Student Support Service in Irish Universities* was also launched at the reception. Both the corporate brochure and the good practice guide are available on the publications section of the IUQB website - http://www.iuqb.ie/IUQB_Publications.html

The first meeting of the new IUQB Board took place on 24 April 2006.

The 4th annual IUQB Conference '*Advancing Research in Ireland*' was hosted by Dublin City University on 5-6 May 2006. It was attended by over 120 delegates from 33 organisations.

The 2nd meeting of the new IUQB Board is scheduled for Monday, 26 June 2006.

11.2   ***IUQB Budget 2006***
The IUQB budget for 2006 is determined at €802,674. University subscriptions amount to a total of €418,500 (invoices issued May 2006). A submission for the balance of funds was submitted to the HEA under the Strategic Initiatives Scheme 2006 as detailed below.

11.3. *Submission to the HEA under the Strategic Initiatives Scheme 2006*

The IUQB made its submission to the HEA under the Quality Assurance Section of the Strategic Initiatives Scheme 2006. A total of €384,174 was requested under the scheme for the period January-December 2006. In the letter to the HEA accompanying the submissions, IUQB stressed the importance of receiving sustained funding from the HEA to complement the university subscriptions, so as to ensure that IUQB meets the standards required of external quality assurance agencies in relation to financial and operational independence from higher education institutions, as required by the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (the Bergen standards).

The submission also contained a proposal to embark on a number of thematic reviews on a sectoral basis, in relation to matters (a) highlighted in the EUA sectoral report and (b) necessary to comply with the Bergen standards, prior to the next round of institutional reviews of the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures.

11.4. *EUA Review of Quality Assurance in Irish Universities*

The next six monthly follow-up report to the HEA requested in response to the EUA Quality Review of Irish Universities (2004-2005) will be sent to the HEA following the IUQB Board meeting on 26 June. The report will update the HEA on further progress with the implementation of the recommendations contained in the EUA Sectoral Report at sectoral and individual university level, based on reports from the seven universities

11.5. *Sectoral Project Activities*
Student Support Services:

- A draft template for the booklet was distributed within the Student Support Services community for feedback at end January/beginning February 2006. Feedback was also sought from national bodies, overseas experts in the area, from students' union members and from current students by means of a student focus group.
- The guidelines of '*Good Practice in the Organisation of Student Support Services in Irish Universities'* was launched on the 24th April 2006.

Teaching and Learning in Mathematics:

- A meeting of a sub-group of the original organising group took place on 27th February 2006. The group assessed and updated the information collated to date and the interim report is being updated.
- A national meeting will be called in September 2006 with a view to finalising recommendations for inclusion in the booklet of good practice to be published in November 2006.

Strategic Planning in Academic Departments:
- The responses to a questionnaire distributed to all participants, together with information collated during facilitator visits are currently being collated to inform the booklet.
- A pre-publication draft of the booklet will be distributed to all the participants in the project, to senior management and to other stakeholders for feedback before going to print in November/December 2006.

Quality Improvement in Teaching and Learning:
- Local reports from all seven universities were drawn up from May to October 2005. A synopsis report of the seven was complied in January 2006.
- On the 23rd May 2006 the organising group agreed that the focus of the project was too narrow and it was agreed to widen the remit of the project to include teaching and learning in the universities as a whole.
- A planning meeting on the 5th July 2006 will decide on the key areas requiring consideration, and will draw up a template for workshops that will take place at a local level in the early autumn. Each university has being invited to send a team comprising of a senior representative of the academic community who has a significant input into teaching and learning matters, a senior member of the teaching and learning unit and the quality officer.

Institutional Research:
- An international workshop took place on the 22nd November 2005 for the seven university and DIT teams. Each team was made up of key senior management personnel. International experts from the US and the UK participated at the meeting. On the basis of the findings from this meeting a template was drawn up to drive workshop discussions at the local university/DIT level with key local stakeholders.
- The workshops took place at the local level from April 2006 with the final workshop to take place at the end of June 2006.

Academic Workloads:
- The initial one day forum for this project took place in UCC on the 8th May 2006. Seven university teams took part. Each team was made up of key senior management personnel including deans of faculty and heads of department with equal representation from the Humanity and the Science disciplines. International experts from the US, UK and New Zealand participated at the meeting. On the basis of the findings from this meeting a template was drawn up to drive workshop discussions at the local university/DIT level with key local stakeholders.
- The workshops will take place at the local level from June-September 2006.

Student Evaluation and Feedback Mechanisms in Quality Assurance

- This project will commence in the summer of 2006, when the incoming student union officers in the 7 universities have taken office. The additional costs to complete this project are included in the 2006 submission to the HEA Strategic Initiatives Scheme.