

IUA Review [07/4] for IUA Meetings in NUIG on 15th October, 2007.

	Section	Page No.
1.	Strategy Process	4.
2.	Research	6.
2.1.	National Research Policy	6.
2.1.1.	Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation 2006-2013	6.
2.1.2.	Advisory Science Council (ASC) – Research Careers	7.
2.2.	European Research Policy	8.
2.2.1.	European Research Area (ERA) Consultation	8.
2.2.2.	Third Country Directive	8.
2.2.3.	Meeting of the Scientific Council of the ERC in IUA/NIU	8.
2.3.	Higher Education Authority	8.
2.3.1.	PRTL I Cycle 4	8.
2.4.	Science Foundation Ireland	9.
2.4.1.	Value for Money (VFM) Review	9.
2.4.2.	Research Overheads	9.
2.5.	Visit of the King of Belgium	9.
2.6.	Irish Researcher Mobility Office and Web Portal	9.
2.6.1.	Personnel	9.
2.6.2.	Statistics	9.
2.6.3.	ERAMORE FP7 Coordination Action	10.
2.7.	EU Seventh Framework Programme	10.
2.7.1.	IUA Marie Curie Office	10.
2.7.2.	‘People’ (Marie Curie) Programme	11.
2.7.3.	‘Research Potential’ Programme	12.
2.7.4.	European Network of National Contact Points for the ‘People’ (Marie Curie) Programme (“Mobility NCPs”)	12.
2.7.5.	FP7 National Support Structure	12.
2.8.	expertiseireland.com	12.
3.	Strategic Innovation Fund	14.
3.1.	Strategic Innovation Fund Cycle I	14.
3.2.	SIF Cycle II Planning	14.

4.	Funding	15.
4.1.	Recurrent Funding	15.
4.1.1.	Recurrent Funding 2007 & 2008	15.
4.1.2.	Tuition Fee Increase Submission 2007/08	15.
4.1.3.	Recurrent Grant Allocation Model	15.
4.1.4.	Estimates for Public Services	16.
4.1.5.	Skills Funding	16.
4.2.	Pension Issues	16.
4.3.	Full Economic Cost System	16.
4.4.	Taxation Issues	17.
4.5.	Nursing	17.
4.6.	Tax Relief at Source on Tuition Fees	17.
4.7.	Unit Costs	17.
4.8.	Procurement	17.
5.	HEA/Department of Education & Science	17.
5.1.	HEA Survey on the Costs of Access Students	17.
5.2.	Framework for Departures from Approved Levels of Remuneration	18.
5.3.	Framework for the Payment by Corporations of Remuneration to University Employees	18.
5.4.	Review of the Borrowing Framework	18.
5.5.	Code of Governance	18.
6.	Access	19.
6.1.	AHEAD	19.
6.2.	Equity of Access Project – SIF Cycle 1 Project	19.
7.	Garda Vetting	19.
8.	Internationalisation	19.
9.	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland	20.
10.	Communications / Events	20.
10.1.	Marketing the University Sector and IUA Services	20.
10.1.1.	4 th Level Ireland Website Development	20.
10.1.2.	4 th IUA e – Newsletter	20.
10.2.	Press/Publicity and Media Relations	20.
10.2.1.	Radio Interviews	20.
10.2.2.	Press Releases	21.

10.2.3.	Featured Articles	21.
10.3.	International Affairs	21.
10.3.1.	Distribution of IUA International Brochure	21.
10.3.2.	Mexican Advert for Irish Universities	21.
10.4.	Events	21.
10.4.1.	Farewell dinner for former President of UCC, Dr Gerard Wrixon	21.
10.4.2.	Visit of the King and Queen of Belgium, 8 th & 9 th October	21.
10.4.3.	Meeting of the European Research Council, 8 th & 9 th October	21.
10.5.	Publications	22.
10.5.1.	International Language versions of IUA Brochures	22.
11.	Quality Assurance	22.
11.1.	IUQB Matters	22.
11.1.1.	IUQB Meetings	22.
11.1.2.	IUQB Budget 2007	22.
11.1.3.	Annual General Meeting 2007	22.
11.1.4.	External Review of IUQB commissioned by the HEA	22.
11.1.5.	Sectoral Project Activities	23.
11.1.6.	IUQB Nationally and Internationally	24.
11.1.7.	IUA/IUQB Publication	24.
11.1.8.	5 th Annual IUQB Conference	24.
12.	Charities Bill 2007	24.
13.	IUA Matters	25.
13.1.	Code of Practice on Research Conflict of Interest	25.
13.2.	Staff changes	25.

IUA Review [07/4] for IUA Meetings in NUIG on 15th October, 2007.

1. Strategy Process

A meeting of IUA Council with Minister Hanafin and Officials took place on Tuesday, 25th September, 2007. The meeting was cordial and productive and helpful in terms of progressing IUA's proposal that a national long term strategy for Higher Education be formulated.

2. Research

2.1. National Research Policy

2.1.1. *Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation 2006-2013*

The SSTI is overseen by two key groups, the Higher Education and Research Group (HERG) and Technology Ireland. The IUA is represented by N. Costello / C. O'Carroll on HERG along with delegates from the key funding agencies and government departments, and the Group is chaired by the Department of Education and Science.

There are currently four active working groups, namely -

- ***Research Careers*** – C. O'Carroll
The Advisory Science Council has been highly active on this issue, see 2.1.2 below. At the September HERG meeting, N Costello undertook to liaise with DIT/IoT representative Prof Brian Norton to set produce a brief position paper for the working group setting out the issues which need to be considered – and expanding on the IUA/IoTI view that research careers cannot be seen in isolation from the wider issue of university careers overall.
- ***High Level Indicators*** – M. Casey
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. A further meeting of the group was held on 21st June 2007.
- ***Capacity Development*** – S. Harkin
The first meeting of this group was held on 24th July.
- ***Infrastructure***
There have been no meetings of this group since 15th March.

2.1.2. *Advisory Science Council (ASC) – Research Careers*

In parallel to the HERG the Advisory Science Council (ASC) has been working with Forfas on making recommendations re the introduction of research careers. The draft report was based on a survey of researchers by Technopolis, the consultants hired to carry out the study. IUA is continuing to input to the process.

2.2. European Research Policy

2.2.1. *European Research Area (ERA) Consultation*

A consultation was held by Forfas on 24th July to discuss and prepare a national response to the Green Paper. The IUA was deeply involved with C. O’Carroll presenting on two of the six pillars, *Realising a single labour market for researchers* and *Strengthening research institutions*. The six pillars are:

- Realising a single labour market for researchers
- Developing world-class research infrastructures;
- Strengthening research institutions;
- Sharing knowledge;
- Optimising research programmes and priorities; and
- Opening ERA to the world.

Separately the EC has established six expert groups to advise on ERA policy; C. O’Carroll has been actively involved in the preparing the expert group report for the Lisbon Conference, The Future of Science and Technology in Europe 8th-10th October.

2.2.2. *Third Country Directive*

The plans for the implementation of this Directive are on track and will be in place by 12th October as agreed by the Irish government. This 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. However the practical implementation on the ground may take longer and we have advised the universities to retain the traditional approach for securing visas and work permits for researchers until we are sure that the new system is fully in place.

2.2.3. *Meeting of the Scientific Council of the ERC in IUA/NUI*

The Scientific Council of the European Research Council (ERC) will hold their board meeting in IUA/NUI on 8th-9th October. The Council is composed of high level scientists across a broad range of disciplines that manage a budget of €8bn to fund outstanding research across Europe. Normally the Council meets in Brussels and the IUA has convinced them to hold this meeting in Dublin. With a number of events organised around their visit, there will be the opportunity for Irish researchers to interact with the Council members (unfortunately of the 22 Council Members there are no Irish representatives).

2.3. Higher Education Authority

2.3.1. PRTL Cycle 4

The results for PRTL were announced in July and we are working with the VP/Deans of Research on dealing with follow up issues.

2.4. Science Foundation Ireland

2.4.1. Value for Money (VFM) Review

The VP/Deans of Research met with the consultants (INDECON) on 11th July as part of the input to the SFI VFM. The first results from the consultants will be presented to the Steering Committee (C. O'Carroll represents IUA) on 18th October.

2.4.2. Research Overheads

Following requests by the Universities Chief Finance Officers Group (UCFOG) to address the inadequate funding for the indirect costs of research (overheads), the HEA has agreed to convene a 'Research Overheads Group' to make proposals to the Higher Education Research Group (HERG) on the development of a policy framework for research overheads which will facilitate the costing and funding of the full existing costs of research. Draft terms of reference have been issued to the IUA for consideration.

2.5. Visit of the King of Belgium

The IUA has been working with the Belgian embassy and the Rectors Conference of Belgium to organise a conference on the occasion of the royal visit of the King and Queen of Belgium to Ireland on 8th-10th October. The academic conference will take place in the Royal College of Physicians and there are three IUA speakers, Prof. Jane Grimson TCD, Prof. Frank Barry NUI-Galway and Prof. Colm Harmon UCD. There is a lunchtime meeting organised between the Belgian Rectors and IUA Council. The theme of the conference and meeting is on greater collaboration in research and technology transfer.

2.6. Irish Researcher Mobility Office and Web Portal

2.6.1. Personnel

The National Co-ordinator has taken maternity leave with effect from 4th June 2007 and Dr. Magda Wislocka has been hired to provide maternity cover. Dr. Wislocka is working with D/ETE and Justice on the implementation of the Third Country Directive in Ireland and the changeover from work permits to hosting agreements from October and act as a liaison with the researchers and research organizations and academia (see also 2.2.2).

2.6.2. Statistics

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

- 8988 - Job Searches on the portal (2440 since last review till 1st of September)

- 155 - Job Applications made directly via the portal application facility (52 since last review) but this does not reflect the large number of applications that have been made directly to the organisation
- 1314 - organisations profile searches have been made by registered users (297 since last review)
- 49102 - unique visits to the national portal (7555 since last review)

There are now 1926 users registered on the portal and this number is continuously growing - (414 since last review) Users can be categorised as follows:

- Early Stage Researchers (Post-graduates) : 735 (184 since last review)
- Experienced Researchers (Post Doc) : 577 (105 since last review)
- Senior Researchers : 127 (36 since last review)
- Undergraduates : 60 (12 since last review)
- Other : 427

2.6.3. *ERAMORE FP7 Coordination Action*

The IUA Marie Curie Office is involved as work package leader in a proposal that has been submitted in August 2007 to the FP7 call for coordination actions within the framework of the European Network of Mobility Centres (ERAMORE). The proposal involves organisations from four countries and focuses on increasing the competencies of ERAMORE network members in serving clients from the private sector. A decision about funding is expected to be made within the next few weeks. IUA is also involved (also as work package leader) in a second ERAMORE proposal, which is concerned with new ways of reintegrating the European scientific diaspora in Third Countries into the scientific community in Europe.

2.7. EU Seventh Framework Programme

2.7.1. *IUA Marie Curie Office*

Over the last few months the IUA Marie Curie Office has continued to provide important input to discussions concerning the ‘People’ (Marie Curie) programme (and to a lesser extent the ‘Capacities - Research Potential’ programme) at the level of the corresponding Programme Committee at the European Commission, in particular with regard to the Work Programme for 2008.

The expertise of the Marie Curie National Contact Point, not only on issues directly related to the Marie Curie programme but also in the broader area of researcher mobility and scientific careers, is widely recognized and attested to by a number of invitations to contribute to international initiatives in these areas. These include the invitation to speak on “Research Mobility and Career Progression in the EU” at the alumni conference of the German Academic Exchange Service in Dublin in September, an invited contribution to the “FP7 Turkey Forum 4” in Ankara organised by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) in October, the request to give a presentation on

the Marie Curie programme at the STRIVE PhD & Fellowship Seminar of the Environmental Protection Agency in November, and an invitation to present best practices from Ireland at the ERAMORE Workshop in Bonn/Germany in December. The IUA Marie Curie Office is also represented in the “Career Structure Committee” of the “Initiative for Science in Europe” (ISE), a European platform bringing together a broad range of organisations involved in science policy, including EUA, ESF, EMBO, ELSO, FEBS, EPS, Eurodoc, Academia Europea, EuroScience etc. A first meeting of this committee is planned for November/December.

2.7.2. ‘People’ (Marie Curie) Programme

Almost all calls from the 2007 Work Programme of the FP7 ‘People’ Specific Programme have now closed, with the first calls from the 2008 Work Programme due to be published in November 2007. The IUA Marie Curie Office has continued to provide personalised assistance to applicants and contractors at all stages of the life-cycle of their projects, from initial information on the various action lines to the clarification of individual eligibility questions and financial issues as well as queries related to the reporting to the European Commission.

A series of workshops on the Marie Curie Individual Actions (Individual Fellowships and Reintegration Grants) was organised in June at six of the seven Irish universities, as well as WIT. The feedback on these workshops was very positive and resulted in a whole number of follow-up contacts between applicants and the IUA Marie Curie Office, including numerous requests for pre-submission proposal checks. Some twenty proposals were closely examined and detailed comments provided to the applicants, allowing them to improve the quality of their proposals before the final submission.

Based on these positive experiences regarding the Marie Curie Individual Actions, the Marie Curie Office is planning to organise in November/December similar workshops at interested institutions on the Marie Curie Host Actions “Industry-Academia Partnerships and Pathways” and “International Research Staff Exchange Scheme”. In addition, a general information event on these schemes will take place at IUA in November, allowing potential applicants to clarify key issues regarding these schemes before deciding about the composition of their consortium and the design of their actual project.

A further action line (COFUND) within the Marie Curie programme concerns the co-funding of regional, national or international fellowship programmes. Within this Marie Curie Action, organisations providing fellowships for the transnational mobility of experienced researchers can apply for 40% co-funding of the full fellowship costs. Eligible organisations include funding agencies, research councils, but also (consortia of) universities. The IUA Marie Curie Office will organise an information event on this funding scheme in order to raise awareness and clarify questions regarding eligibility and implementation, with the aim to ensure a strong Irish participation in the call.

A monitoring exercise of the FP6 Marie Curie “Transfer of Knowledge” projects involving Irish partners was carried out at the beginning of October by a delegation from the European Commission. The logistical aspects of their four-day visiting tour to Galway, Dublin and Cork were taken care of by the IUA Marie Curie Office in close collaborations with the Research Offices of NUIG, RCSI and UCC. This monitoring exercise provided valuable feedback to the Commission regarding the quality of the research carried out by the Irish teams involved, but also showed up a number of common problems encountered in the implementation and administration of the projects. The monitoring exercise was financially supported by Enterprise Ireland within the framework of the FP7 National Support Network.

2.7.3. ‘Research Potential’ Programme

Given that the ‘Capacities - Research Potential’ programme is almost exclusively addressed to “Convergence Regions” and “Outermost Regions of the EU”, the opportunities for Irish participation in the programme are very limited. However, a special call in 2007 addressed to consortia involving at least one partner from a ‘Western Balkan Country’ allowed organisations from any EU member state or associated country to participate. Two proposals led by Irish organisations were submitted, and both of these have been evaluated positively. The IUA Marie Curie Office has made contact with the coordinators of both projects in order to offer support in the implementation process.

2.7.4. European Network of National Contact Points for the ‘People’ (Marie Curie) Programme (“Mobility NCPs”)

IUA is a work package leader in the proposal for a European Network of Mobility NCPs that has been submitted to the European Commission for the deadline on 24 August 2007. While the Commission has not yet communicated any official decision regarding the funding of the project, the feedback received so far has been very positive. The project involves 20 partners from 17 countries and will run for three years. The work package led by the IUA consists of a number of activities aimed at providing feedback to the Commission on the implementation of the Marie Curie programme, but also on more general policy issues related to researcher mobility.

2.7.5. FP7 National Support Structure

The National Contact Point at the IUA belongs to the FP7 National Support Network, which brings together all Irish National Contact Points for the different FP7 programmes. Over the last couple of months the IUA Marie Curie Office has provided regular input to the further development of the network. In particular, the IUA hosted the monthly network meeting in July.

2.8. expertiseireland.com

Funding continues to be a priority for *expertiseireland.com*. The portal has been functioning on minimum funding since February 2007 which has resulted in a significant decrease in promotion and awareness activity, and marketing of the portal.

The number of experts contributing information to the portal stands at 5,397 as of September 30, 2007. The breakdown is as follows:

Trinity College Dublin	889
Dublin Institute of Technology	678
University College Dublin	658
University of Ulster	613
Dublin City University	515
University College Cork	503
National University of Ireland, Galway	471
Queen's University Belfast	410
University of Limerick	322
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	8
Dundalk Institute of Technology	7

There was a meeting with representatives from the Australian Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources, organised by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The Australian department have received some funding and are quite anxious to create an expertise Australia portal.

Teagasc have completed testing and the publication of expert profiles to the portal is pending approval. Testing from the UCD system is well established and publication to the expertiseireland.com portal is scheduled for the end of November 2007.

The University of Ulster and Queen's University Belfast have developed new Research Management Systems to replace the InfoEd Research Support System. The University of Ulster and Queen's University Belfast will start testing feeds on information from their new systems to the portal, towards the end of the year, following the Research Assessment Exercises. The Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (created as the amalgamation of DARD (Department of Agriculture and Rural Development NI) Science Service and the Agricultural Research Institute Northern Ireland) have been creating their own database in line with the xml schema, developed by J4B for *expertiseireland.com*. Following senior management approval of the database, testing for the contribution of expert profiles to the *expertiseireland.com* portal, will begin.

Additions to the number of technology transfer licensing opportunities on the portal resulted in the current figure of 67. The contribution from each Institution is as follows:

National University of Ireland, Galway	15
National University of Ireland, Maynooth	15
University College Dublin	11
Dublin Institute of Technology	10
Trinity College Dublin	7
University College Cork	4
University of Limerick	3
Dublin City University	2

NUI Maynooth was contacted in July by a company in Limerick regarding licensing one of the opportunities published on the *expertiseireland.com* portal.

3. Strategic Innovation Fund

3.1. Strategic Innovation Fund Cycle I

IUA projects funded under Cycle I of SIF are progressing well in the third quarter of funding. Tendering exercises are completed or underway in a number of projects for the hiring of external experts to implement parts of the workplan. The quarterly progress report, with details of individual projects, will be given by Siobhan Harkin, IUA, for Council, Registrars and Plenary attention.

3.2. SIF Cycle II Planning

The deadline for SIF Cycle 2 is 3.00pm, 19th October, 2007. The Cycle 2 briefing session was held in the HEA on the 21st September and was attended by representatives of the IUA and all the universities. Proposers applying for funding under Cycle 2 will be offered the opportunity to make an oral presentation during early November. Funding allocations and project plans will be finalised by the end of the year.

The IUA SIF II Planning Group (comprising representatives across senior university management - Registrars, Finance Officers, Secretaries, HR, VPDoR and Teaching and Learning) met on the 12th September to progress the sectoral submission. An ad-hoc IUA group focusing on a sectoral approach to systems development in the sector met on 2nd October.

The high-level group established by IUA and CoDIT met on 5th September to discuss areas of mutual benefit under SIF II and collaborative initiatives will be included in the sectoral submission.

The draft sectoral submission under SIF II will be discussed by Council, Plenary and standing groups and sign-off will be completed as appropriate.

4. Funding

4.1. Recurrent Funding

4.1.1. Recurrent Funding 2007 & 2008

Final recurrent grant allocations in respect of 2007 were notified to universities in August, following completion of the student numbers audit and application of the HEA's moderating mechanism. Grant increases ranged from 3.03% to 10.27%.

Recent media coverage has indicated that public finances are currently in deficit and are likely to report a deficit for 2007. This may have implications for public expenditure in 2008 and initial indications suggest that recurrent expenditure and in particular non-pay expenditure is likely to be targeted for potential cost savings. The IUA will be monitoring developments and working to ensure that appropriate increases in core grant will be provided.

4.1.2. Tuition Fee Increase Submission 2007/08

As reported previously the University Chief Finance Officers Group made a submission to the HEA in respect of the required increase in tuition fees for 2007/08 noting that the increase required to cover the cost of known unavoidable cost increases was in the region of 7.1%. The Department of Education and Science has now subsequently approved an increase in the undergraduate tuition fee of up to 6.6% for the academic year 2007/08 and an increase in the charge for registration, examinations and student services from €800 to €825 (3.1% increase). Accordingly further cost efficiencies will be required in 2007/08 to maintain existing levels of service.

4.1.3. Recurrent Grant Allocation Model

As noted at 4.1.1. above final grant allocations for 2007 have been determined following the completion of the student number audit process. Issues arising from audits have been reported to individual institutions by the HEA. In respect of 2008 recurrent grant allocations it has been agreed that student numbers as at 1 March 2007 (relating to 2006/07 academic year) would be used for grant allocation purposes and student returns are required to be submitted by 26th October 2007 at the latest.

The HEA's recurrent grant allocation model will continue to be reviewed and developed and there are a number of policy related issues which require detailed consideration by the sector. Following an initial meeting of the Registrar's and Chief Finance Officer's groups earlier this year to consider such issues the IUA wrote to the HEA in respect of some of the key issues. The development of the RGAM will be kept under on-going review by the sector.

4.1.4. *Estimates for Public Services*

As reported in the June IUA review the IUA wrote to the Assistant Secretary of the Department of Education and Science expressing its concern in relation to the revised reporting of university and IoT grant allocations in the ‘*Revised Estimates for Public Expenditure*’. University and IoT grant allocations which previously had been reported separately under sub-heads E4 and E5 respectively were now being reported as a single line under sub-head E4. The response from the DES in respect of this matter noted that, despite the revised reporting format the funding requirements of both sectors will continue to be dealt with separately by the department.

4.1.5. *Skills Funding*

The HEA wrote to university chief finance officers in September 2007 outlining revised treatment of undergraduate ICT skills programme and the Postgraduate Skills Conversion Programme funding. UCFOG will be responding to the HEA in respect of this issue on behalf of the sector.

4.2. *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. As reported previously it is proposed that existing university pension schemes be taken over by the State and that the funds be transferred to the National Treasury Management Agency. This proposal has been agreed in principle by the relevant government departments. Following consideration by the DoF management advisory committee it was clarified that legislation was required to give effect to the proposal and therefore a government rather than a ministerial decision was required. Furthermore it was noted that universities could not be looked at in isolation and non-commercial semi-state bodies with funded schemes would also have to be taken into account. A memo is now ready to be submitted to the Minister for Finance and subsequently to government. It is expected that a government decision will be forthcoming within the next four weeks.

There remain a number of operational issues to be addressed and it is proposed that a number of joint IUA/HEA working groups would be set up to address such issues. Issues to be addressed include funding for the future pension liabilities of funded research staff, grant allocation and operational implications for the new pension arrangements and issues relating to the finalisation of the model schemes.

4.3. *Full Economic Cost System*

The design and development of a full economic cost system for the sector is progressing under the IUA SIF sectoral project. The consultants, JM Consulting Limited, have met

with senior management in all universities and other relevant stakeholders and have prepared a consultation paper based on their initial work. Further meetings with relevant staff from institutions are currently being scheduled and the consultants will be making a presentation to the IUA plenary group at the October meeting. Workshops for finance staff are also being arranged to consider detailed technical aspects of the proposed system. It is hoped that an agreed system and detailed implementation plan for each university would be finalised by March 2008. Funding for the implementation of the system is being sought under SIF Cycle II.

4.4. Taxation Issues

The sector is continuing to work towards a resolution of the PAYE issues arising from correspondence with the Revenue Commissioners.

4.5. Nursing

The Post-Registration Nursing & Midwifery Education Review Group issued a draft report in September 2007.

4.6. Tax Relief at Source on Tuition Fees

The IUA continues to liaise with the Revenue Commissioners in relation to the capture of data at source in respect of tax relief on tuition fee payments. Following initial consultations with Revenue the IUA issued a document setting out the sectors' understanding of Revenue's requirements. The IUA, through the finance managers group will continue to work with Revenue to finalise an agreed system for capturing and returning the relevant data.

4.7. Unit Costs

The HEA wrote to the UCFOG chair noting that the last complete set of unit cost returns submitted to the HEA was in respect of 2002/03. The HEA are seeking the views of the group in relation to how to progress the submission of unit cost returns. Having considered the issue UCFOG agreed that they would recommend to the HEA that they would engage directly with those institutions that were no longer able to submit unit cost returns in order to agree a suitable solution. All other institutions would continue to submit unit cost returns until a full economic costing system is implemented.

4.8. Procurement

A copy of the 2006 year-end report of the University Procurement and Contract Officers Group has been produced. UCFOG will be liaising with the group in relation to objectives for 2008 over the coming weeks.

5. HEA/Department of Education & Science

5.1. HEA Survey on the Costs of Access Students

As reported previously the HEA had engaged consultants to undertake a review of the costs of access students. The IUA wrote to the HEA on 18 May 2007 requesting a meeting with the consultants prior to finalisation of the report. A meeting was eventually held with HEA staff only on 24 July, during which IUA was not given sight of the report. The draft final report was subsequently issued by the HEA in August 2007.

The sector has a number of concerns regarding the methodology employed for the survey and hence the findings contained in the report. These concerns were communicated to the HEA in a letter from the IUA CEO.

5.2. Framework for Departures from Approved Levels of Remuneration

A framework for departures from approved levels of remuneration in accordance with Section 25(5)(a) of the Universities Act 1997 was agreed between the HEA and universities in February 2000 and subsequently renewed in 2002. The HEA has now requested that in accordance with paragraph 2.3.4 of the framework a review of the framework would be undertaken and has requested the input of the sector to the terms of reference of such a review. IUA CEO has been in initial contact with HEA on this matter and will be pursuing more substantively following Council.

5.3. Framework for the Payment by Corporations of Remuneration to University Employees

Section 25(5)(b) of the Universities Act 1997 provides for payments by corporations established under Section 13(2)(c) to university employees of remuneration, fees, allowances and expenses in accordance with a framework to be agreed between the universities and the HEA. IUA is to discuss the development of such a framework with HEA.

5.4. Review of the Borrowing Framework

A framework for borrowing and loan guarantees in accordance with Section 38 of the Universities Act 1997 was agreed between the universities and the HEA in 2001 and is due for review in accordance with the provisions of section 7 of the framework. Draft terms of reference for such a review have been circulated to UCFOG for consideration. UCFOG are proposing that a joint IUA/HEA working group would undertake the review.

5.5. Code of Governance

The Code of Governance has been or will shortly be approved by the Governing Authorities of all institutions. Arising from the Code universities will be required to include a Statement of Internal Control in their financial statements. The Statement of Internal Control requires that the Governing Authority make a statement regarding the effectiveness of the systems of internal control including financial, operational and compliance controls and risk management systems. UCFOG have written to the IUA Secretaries Group asking them to advise in respect of any issues that may impact on the ability of Governing Authority to sign-off on such a statement.

6. Access

6.1. AHEAD

IUA has been represented through Lewis Purser on a 'Best Practices Guidelines' steering group coordinated by AHEAD (Association for Higher Education Access & Disability), with a mandate to identify and promote best practices regarding students with a disability, contained in the materials submitted to the HEA during its 2006 evaluation of third level access programmes. This will result in a publication and website aimed at practitioners and institutions. These should be available at the end of 2007.

6.2. Equity of Access Project - SIF Cycle 1 Project

Although the start date for this project was somewhat delayed, good progress has been made over the last quarter. The project is being steered by a high level Advisory Group, chaired by Professor J Browne (NUIG) and representative of key stakeholders. Data analysis and qualitative review of existing supplementary admission routes for under-represented groups is well underway. Consultation on all aspects of a reformed/modified process is ongoing and is resulting in positive stakeholder engagement. A SIF 2 proposal will be made to HEA to facilitate roll-out the project nationwide.

7. Garda Vetting

The IUA has responded on behalf of all universities to a recent proposal from the Garda Central Vetting Unit regarding a minimum age of 18 years in order for Garda Vetting to proceed.

8. Internationalisation

The Enterprise Ireland responsible official for promoting Irish educational exports, Frank O'Connor, will be retiring at the end of 2007. His replacement will be Terry McParland, currently Enterprise Ireland director for the ASEAN region (Association of South East Asian Nations) in Malaysia. A preliminary meeting took place between the IUA executive and Mssrs McParland and O'Connor on 26 September 07 to explore areas of ongoing interest and concern of the universities.

A meeting was held on 25 September 2007 between Mary Lou Hartmann, Director of the George J. Mitchell Scholarships at the US-Ireland Alliance, and John McPartland, TCD, chair of the IUA group of directors for international student affairs, Emer Cunningham, UCD, representing the network of 4th level coordinators, and members of the IUA

executive. The meeting explored areas in which the US-Ireland alliance could promote various aspects of graduate studies and research at Irish universities through its website and other means, aimed inter alia at potential Mitchell scholars and their advisors in the US. Further dialogue will take place within the relevant IUA networks in order to ensure best use is made of this opportunity.

9. National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

The IUA and NQAI have agreed to put in place a small working group comprised of a broad range of practitioners and policy makers across the universities, in order to take forward a number of issues related to the ongoing implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications. A preparatory meeting will take place on 9 October 2007.

The NQAI has been the Irish contact point for an OECD project on the recognition of prior learning. Prof. Anne Ryan from NUI Maynooth is the IUA representative on this project. An Irish Country Background Report on the Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning (Appendix X) has been finalised and has received a positive response from the OECD. It can also be downloaded from the NQF www.nqf.ie and NQAI websites www.nqai.ie.

10. Communications / Events

10.1. Marketing the University Sector and IUA Services

10.1.1. 4th Level Ireland Website Development

A final logo for 4th Level Ireland is nearing completion and the framework for a stand alone website has been created. The development of the website will be carried out through October and November with hopes for an early December launch.

10.1.2. 4th IUA e- Newsletter

Work is ongoing on the October edition of IUA news in which we aim to feature progress of SIF 1 projects, new publications and international marketing initiatives.

10.2. Press/Publicity and Media Relations

Much has featured in the national media about the issues of university funding and the possible call to re-introduce fees. Until meetings can be held on the issue with government the IUA will no longer be facilitating articles on this subject.

10.2.1. Radio Interviews

Ned Costello was interviewed for the following shows/stations

Aug 1 st	Highland Radio - News and Current Affairs
Aug 1 st	RTE - News at One
Aug 1 st	Newstalk – The Right Hook

10.2.2. Press Releases

11th July – IUA Libraries National Research Portal to Raise the Profile of Irish Research Findings.

10.2.3. Featured Articles

July	Knowledge Ireland	<i>University Challenge</i>
Sept	Education Magazine	<i>Entering a 4th Dimension</i>

10.3. International Affairs

10.3.1. Distribution of IUA International Brochure

The international and 4th level brochures were sent to Mexico for the Euro Posgrads Fair at the end of March and to the Irish Embassy in Russia for a postgraduate student fair in May. All IUA brochures are available on-line on the IUA website for download.

10.3.2. Mexican Advert for Irish Universities

As part of the marketing activities for the Mexican market the IUA produced an ad for the international officers in advance of their recruitment trip. The ad appeared in the June edition of *Reforma Universitarios* supplement.

10.4. Events

As well as IUA organised events, members of IUA staff will also partake in a number of external events throughout 2007.

10.4.1. Farewell dinner for former President of UCC, Dr Gerard Wrixon

The presidents and provost of the seven universities and senior management came together to honour Dr Gerard Wrixon on his retirement from UCC. The dinner and presentation took place in the conservatory of O'Reilly Hall at UCD on Monday June 18th. Also present were Dr Wrixon's wife Marcia and Ned Costello CEO of IUA. The event was organised by the IUA to thank Dr Wrixon for his contribution to the university sector over the past eight years.

10.4.2. Visit of the King and Queen of Belgium, 8th & 9th October

The IUA is providing advice and assistance to the Belgian Embassy in Dublin and to the Royal Palace in Belgium on the upcoming visit of the Royal Couple and the Rectors of many of Belgium's top universities. The IUA has organised 3 top academic speakers to address the delegation at an Industry/Academia forum on Oct 9th. The Group will also be visiting Trinity College and UL as part of their trip.

10.4.3. Meeting of the European Research Council, 8th & 9th October

The IUA will host a meeting of the prestigious European Research Council in the IUA and NUI offices on October 8th and 9th, and will facilitate contact with Irish journalists, Irish researchers and other interested parties.

10.5. Publications

10.5.1. International Language versions of IUA Brochures

Work has begun on translating the IUA 4th Level Brochure into Chinese and Spanish to better support the marketing efforts in these regions. It is hoped that the Chinese version will be ready for the China Ireland conference organized by the Irish Embassy in Beijing and the China Foreign Affairs University, to take place in Beijing in November 07. The Spanish version will be used for marketing the universities primarily in Mexico as part of the drive to recruit students under the Conyact agreement, and then later for Argentina and Chile.

11. Quality Assurance

11.1. IUQB Matters

11.1.1. IUQB Meetings

A meeting of the IUQB Board took place on 24th September. The meeting noted that the company had filed its first set of accounts with the annual return in August 2007.

The next meeting of the IUQB Board is scheduled for 19th November 2007.

11.1.2. IUQB Budget 2007

Following the Board meeting on 21 May and the IUA Council meeting on 18 June, the university subscriptions to IUQB for 2007 were agreed. This provided for the recruitment of additional staff in the IUQB office to honour current and future commitments.

11.1.3. Annual General Meeting 2007

The first Annual General Meeting of members of the Company was held on 18th June 2007. The meeting considered the Report of the Board of Directors and the Financial Statements for IUQB for 2006.

11.1.4. External Review of IUQB commissioned by the HEA

The final terms of reference for the review were approved by the HEA in June 2007, following consultation with Irish stakeholders and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

A quality committee for the self-evaluation process was established in August 2007. The committee is being chaired by Dr. Caroline Hussey. A project manager has been recruited to oversee the production of the self-evaluation report, which will be completed and sent for approval to the Board at its meeting on 19th November 2007.

The HEA are in the process of appointing an external panel for the review. The panel will consist of national and international members representative of higher education institutions, quality assurance agencies, students and other external stakeholders.

The review is a three-stand process which will examine: (i) the performance of IUQB under its objects as a company, (ii) the activities funded by the HEA, (iii) whether IUQB substantially complies with the requirements of an external quality assurance agency under Part 3 of the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (the European Standards and Guidelines).

The review visit by the external panel is expected to take place in February/March 2008. As part of the consultation process, public notices were placed in three national newspapers. Further details are available at:

http://www.iuqb.ie/IUQB_Quality_Review.html

11.1.5. Sectoral Project Activities

The project organising group for ***Institutional Research*** comprises of Aoife Flanagan (IR Officer-NUIG), Maura McGinn (IR Officer-UCD), Joan Mullen (IR Officer-NUIM), Jim Gosling (Quality Officer-NUIG), Tony Carey (Director of Strategic Planning –UCD), Noel O Connor (Campus Planning-DIT) and the IUQB Programme Manager. Meetings of the project management group for the Institutional Research project took place on the 22nd June, 17th August and the 11th 2007. A draft of the Interim report for the project was distributed in advance to all delegates attending the forthcoming IUQB fifth annual conference on 12-13 October 2007. The interim report will be of use in informing proceedings. Feedback from the conference presentations and the workshop sessions together with feedback received on the draft interim report received during the course of the proceedings will be used to inform the booklet of good practice. The Interim report will be available on the 1st October 2007.

The project organising group for ***Quality Improvement in Teaching and Learning*** includes Jacqueline Potter and Ciara O'Farrell (both TCD), Iain McClaren (NUIG), Aine Hyland (ex-UCC), Bettie Higgs (UCC) and the IUQB Programme Manager. A draft of the interim report was submitted by the team leader Aine Hyland for distribution at a national conference to be held on the 9/10th November 2007 in UCC.

The organising group for ***Strategic Planning in Academic Departments*** comprises of John Davies (UK) and the IUQB programme Manager. Norma Ryan (UCC) and Tony Carey (UCD) work in an editorial capacity for the booklet. A first draft of the booklet was received from John Davies on 6th September 2007 which is to be reviewed by the editorial group. A questionnaire will request feedback on the outcomes from and the implementation of the strategic plans developed as part of the project from all departments involved, the university project leaders and senior management. The feedback obtained will be incorporated into the draft booklet.

The project organising group for *Mathematics, Teaching and Learning* comprises of Ann O'Shea (NUIM), David Wraith (NUIM), Niall Madden (NUIG) and the IUQB Programme Manager. A meeting of the project management group took place on the 14th June 2007. Work on chapters of the booklet continued over the summer period and a meeting to reconvene the group has been postponed until October.

11.1.6. IUQB Nationally and Internationally

The CEO made presentations to the Israeli Council on Higher Education during their visit to the HEA in June 2007 and to the incoming governing body of St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra in September 2007.

The CEO made a presentation to the pool of evaluators of the EUA Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) at the annual induction seminar in Copenhagen in September 2007.

11.1.7. IUA/IUQB Publication

The second edition of *A Framework for Quality in Irish Universities* (first published by CHIU in 2003) was launched by Mr. Tom Boland, Chief Executive of the HEA at the 5th annual IUQB conference in Galway on 12-13 October 2007. The document was jointly published by IUA and IUQB.

11.1.8. 5th Annual IUQB Conference

The annual IUQB conference was held in NUI Galway on 12-13 October 2007. The theme of the conference was *Institutional Research: benefiting the student experience and institutional improvement*. The conference was attended by 150 participants from Ireland and overseas. The conference featured speakers from the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Sweden.

Details on the conference are available at:

<http://www.conference.ie/Conferences/index.asp?Conference=44>

12. Charities Bill 2007

Following the reconvening of the Dail the Charities Bill 2007 has been returned to the order paper for the Dail in its existing format. This bill will have implications for universities as charitable bodies and also for foundations or similar bodies that may be involved in fund raising activities. The IUA will continue to monitor progress in respect of this bill.

13. IUA Matters

13.1. Code of Practice on Research Conflict of Interest

At the request of Enterprise Ireland and associated research funders, IUA has been requested to put in place a process to agree a Code of Practice in this area. Given the cross cutting nature of the issue, it is proposed to establish a cross functional working group comprised of representatives of VPs Research/Innovation, TTOs and Secretaries to work with EI Consultant M.McFarlane to progress this with a view to agreeing a code before year end. IUA CEO will chair the group.

13.2. Staff changes

Siobhan Harkin [Project Officer] is leaving IUA at end October to take up a position with HEA. Siobhan has made a significant contribution to the development of the universities during her time with the Association and we look forward to continued collaboration with her in her new role within HEA.

Louise Bruton [Executive Assistant] recently resigned from IUA and we wish her well in her future endeavours.