

IUA Review [08/4] for IUA Meetings in TCD on 13th October, 2008.

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IUA Review [08/4] for IUA Meetings in Trinity College Dublin on 13th October, 2008.

1. Research

1.1. National Research Policy

1.1.1. *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. Updates on two of the working groups, Capacity Development and Research Careers are below;

- ***Capacity Development***

The group met on 17th June, 29th July and 23rd September 2008 focusing on the delivery of SSTI target numbers, the IUQB PhD Review and the IUA proposal for Co-ordinated Research Audit. The IUA is represented at these meetings by C. O'Carroll, W. Forsythe and M. Ryan (UCD and Chair of Deans of Graduate Studies).

1. SSTI Numbers

Over the summer period the HEA has been gathering data on SSTI target numbers from all of the funding agencies. The latest data was presented at the meeting on 23rd September. In terms of projections the numbers seem to be on track. However, there are a number of outstanding issues based on how the numbers are calculated. Each set of data on PI, Postdoc, PhD, Technical/Admin and Other is calculated based funded research contracts. This gives rise to double counting (at least) of PI's as the same individual may be the PI for a number of contracts. In addition, there are many instances where a PI acts as only a nominal signatory on a contract (e.g. where the actual applicant is on a fixed term contract). In order to obtain a more realistic estimate, the IUA will ask the universities for data on the numbers of academics with research accounts, the numbers of academics with no research accounts but who supervise students and other ancillary data. This will give a more accurate representation of the numbers of those who are PIs and will prevent double counting. It will also prevent the counting of research fellows who cannot apply independently for research income but who may otherwise be returned as a 'PI'. The data on SSTI numbers will be presented at the next HERG meeting on 8th October.

2. *Co-ordinated Research Audit*

This proposal was made to the Working Group by the IUA at the meeting on 11th January, 2008. The EPA is chairing a meeting of research funders which will take place on 4th November. This research funders' group will also seek the advice of an accountancy firm and other professional bodies.

• *Researcher Careers*

As noted in the last IUA review Dolores Cahill (UCD), presented the Advisory Science Council's recommendations on Research Careers at the HERG meeting on the 14th May 2008. This report will be formally launched on 9th October. The HERG working group on Research Careers will meet on 6th October to discuss the ASC report.

Following its first meeting on 22nd May the IUA Strategy and Strategic Innovation (SSI) committee established a Research Careers group. The group met for the first time on 25th July in IUA. The members of the group are:

Paul Giller, UCC
Chris McNairney NUIG
Eamon Drea UCD
Jim Walshe NUIM
Tony McMahon TCD
Ailish Quinlivan UL
David Lloyd TCD
Ned Costello, IUA
Conor O'Carroll, IUA
Jennifer Cleary, IUA

The purpose of the group is to scope out an agreed sectoral policy for the researcher career. Issues addressed included: career based on stages, role of HR, and current IR issues. The group have agreed to gather relevant documentation on the issue of researcher careers information at an institutional level. An updated document of issues and comments will be produced for the next meeting of the group.

There has been significant EU activity on the issue of Research careers as part of the renewal of the Lisbon agenda. The European Commission has produced the communication, '*Better Careers and More Mobility: A European Partnership for Researchers*' (COM 2008 317). The IUA has been working with DETE in developing Ireland's position on Council Conclusions for the communication. The areas of agreement are the following four areas:

1. Open recruitment and portability of grants
2. Social security and pension needs of researchers
3. Attractive employment and working conditions

4. Enhancing training, skills and experience of researchers

The Member States have agreed to adopt a national action plan in 2009 with priority actions to be implemented by the end of 2010. It is expected that DETE will ask Forfás to consult and develop a national position. In terms of follow up with the Commission Ireland will be represented in Brussels on the Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility by Conor O'Carroll (IUA) and Brendan McCormack (DETE).

1.2. Science Foundation Ireland

1.2.1. *New SFI Salary Guidelines*

Following consultation and discussions with the IUA at meetings on 14th April, 15th May and 5th June 2008, SFI have introduced new guidelines for the stipends/salaries of researchers funded on their grants.

1.2.2. *SFI Value for Money Review*

The INDECON report on SFI was finalised and published in July 2008 following approval by the Steering Group (C. O'Carroll a member). The report makes a number of recommendations on foot of the assessment undertaken and conclusions reached in the review. The recommendations maintain the focus of existing SFI operations and are designed to improve the ongoing implementation and management of their programmes, and also to maximise the future impact and value for money from the substantial public resources invested in SFI supported research in Ireland. The recommendations are:

1. SFI should continue to implement its core mission of funding research excellence in areas where Ireland can compete effectively on a global scale.
2. An increased focus on effective industry collaboration and measures to enhance the commercialisation of research should form part of future management of the next phases of SFI funding.
3. Increased focus is required to align collaborations by SFI-funded researchers with the requirements of industry based in Ireland.
4. Mechanisms to ensure that SFI funding maximises the leverage of EU and other international sources of funding for Irish research should be introduced.
5. The development agencies, including IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland, should intensify efforts to engage new and existing client companies with SFI-funded research teams/centres.
6. SFI should consider the merits of a centrally managed database of inputs and outputs relating to SFI funded projects, which would track a range of input, output and impact indicators.
7. A system of ex-post review, which would combine elements of the existing ex-ante peer review and interim review process but place greater emphasis on the assessment of economic impact and value for money, should be put in place for completed SFI-funded research.

8. Continued efforts are needed to ensure effective inter-agency interaction and co-ordination including, in particular, between SFI and HEA.
9. SFI should carry out regular, systematic bibliometric analysis of SFI-funded research outputs and publish the highlights of this analysis.
10. Measures to enhance the likelihood of top-ranking researchers remaining in Ireland should be given a high priority

The full report can be accessed at <http://www.entemp.ie/science/technology/sfi.htm>.

1.3. Fourth Level Ireland Network Group

1.3.1. Progress

The final schedule for the IUQB-IUA Joint Conference (14th/15th October 2008) entitled '*Challenges & Opportunities in Developing 4th Level Ireland*' was agreed and circulated to over five hundred potential attendees from higher education, the wider public sector, private sector and others. The programme is available from <https://www.gowestconferences.ie/IUQB2008>

The Irish Universities' PhD Graduates' Skills Statement has been finalised and circulated to respective Academic Council for noting with strong endorsement from the Deans of Graduate Education, Vice-Presidents for Research and Registrars. The statement has undergone a number of formatting iterations and will very shortly become available for circulation and use.

The Network Coordinator (Dr. Westley Forsythe) presented at a number of events including Graduate Careers Ireland's bi-annual conference. The theme of the conference was Fourth Level education. At this event the Network Coordinator outlined the Network's role and work to date including the skills statement, early planning for the conference and the primary principles of Fourth Level education that the Deans of Graduate Studies consider crucial to the achievement of the Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation's goals.

The initial draft of the Fourth Level Ireland website has been completed. The Deans have provided a response to the content and the IUA will publish a final version of the website in the near future.

The Fourth Level Network has interacted effectively with both the HEA and the IUQB on their respective reviews of Structured PhD programmes and the *National guidelines on the organisation of PhD programmes*. The Network continues to liaise with both the HEA and the IUQB on these two important reviews.

The Network has liaised with the Queen's University Belfast on the potential for all Ireland initiatives on graduate education. This may involve the leveraging of funds with the Northern Ireland Department of Education and Learning to support split site studentships and all Ireland 'gradschools' at which PhD students would receive training in a number of

generic and transferable skills. The IUA forwarded a letter to QUB Research and Regional Services unit expressing interest in exploring opportunities to develop collaborative links in graduate education.

The Network has also considered the practicalities of recording and agreeing on student participation in inter-institutional graduate programmes. The Network has drafted an initial 'Credit Transfer Agreement' on this issue and further consideration on this issue will take place before submission to the sector.

The position paper on the needs and organisational principles of structured PhD education is nearing completion and will be available in autumn 2008.

1.3.2. *Activities for the Next Period*

The IUA will print and disseminate the 'skills statement' and the Network Coordinator is scheduled to speak at a number of university events, including PhD student inductions, to explain the statement and its purpose.

The Network Coordinator will attend a conference in Helsinki on 1st-2nd October 2008 sponsored under the Bologna process discussing '*Third Cycle Degrees: Competences and Researcher Careers*'. This event will explore the internationalisation of doctoral education and the promotion of researcher mobility.

The Network will further consider the practical challenges of inter-institutional graduate programmes.

The review panel for the review of *National guidelines on the organisation of PhD programmes* will have Fourth Level Network representation.

CAPES, the funding agency of the Brazilian ministry of education, have approached the IUA with a view to exploring areas of potential collaboration in both undergraduate and postgraduate education. This may include the hosting of a seminar to discuss possibilities and senior officers of CAPES will meet with the IUA in October.

The Network Coordinator will attend the EU-US higher education conference in Atlanta, Georgia, which will explore ways to attract more people into science and engineering careers and the development of transatlantic degrees to attract more talented young people into science careers

1.4. Higher Education Authority

1.4.1. *Graduate Education Review*

This review is currently being carried out on behalf of the HEA by CIRCA (Michael Fitzgibbon and Aidan Kennedy <http://www.circa.ie/>). It is being done with the involvement

of two external advisors, Prof. Chris Park¹ and Prof. Bernard Morley². This is not a review of PhD programmes but rather a snapshot of the current situation. The questionnaire will be repeated over time and will evolve following this exercise. It is important to understand that review will allow the HEA to tighten definitions on such variables as completion time and what is a structured PhD. Outcome of this exercise will include the development of a definition of a structured PhD. It was agreed that the IUQB Guidelines could be as a basis for definition. The review has taken place through interviews with each of the Deans of Graduate Studies. The consultants have now visited all universities and have reported their satisfaction with the universities' engagement with the review. They have also indicated that the universities appear very well informed on their strategies. The review is proceeding slightly ahead of schedule and a full report is expected by the end of October.

1.4.2. *Fixed Term Workers Act*

The HEA is conducting a review of the Fixed Term Workers Act and is gathering information, especially legal opinion. The IUA has provided them with full details of our activities including legal opinion.

1.5. EU Seventh Framework Programme

1.5.1. *IUA Marie Curie Office*

During the period since the last review, activities in the area of the Marie Curie programme focused mainly on providing support to applicants to the Individual Fellowship schemes and the Initial Training Networks, as well as providing support to successful applicants in previous Marie Curie calls (in particular the Industry-Academia Pathways and Partnerships scheme and the COFUND scheme). The National Contact Point (NCP – Dagmar Meyer) also participated in the Marie Curie Conference which took place in Barcelona in June in conjunction with the EuroScience Open Forum 2008 and brought together some 300 Marie Curie fellows from across Europe, provided input to the recently launched impact assessment of the Marie Curie Actions in FP6 and the impact assessment of the ERAMORE (European Network of Mobility Centres / European Researchers' Mobility Portal) activities in the period 2004-07, which are being carried out by The Evaluation Partnership / Deloitte on behalf of the European Commission.

1.5.2. *'People' (Marie Curie) Programme*

During the period covered by this review, there were a number of major deadlines in the Marie Curie programme: the deadlines for the Individual Fellowships on 19th August 2008 (Intra-European, International Incoming and International Outgoing Fellowships) and the one for the Initial Training Networks on 2nd September. A series of specific workshops were organised in order to inform potential applicants of the opportunities available to them, explain the eligibility and other rules of the schemes and offer individualised support. Workshops took place in six of the seven universities (as for other

¹ (<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/vc/park.htm>)

² (<http://www1.imperial.ac.uk/medicine/people/b.morley/>)

deadlines the UCD Research Office did not express any interest in such a workshop being organised at UCD). Many individual meetings with applicants for fellowships or representatives of ITN consortia followed those general presentations. The NCP also provided tailor made support to a whole number of applicants by carrying out mock evaluations of their proposals and offering assistance on how to improve them.

Interest in particular in the Initial Training Networks has been very high this year. Based on preliminary feedback received from the universities (unfortunately not all Research Offices replied to the NCPs inquiry), approximately twice as many Irish lead ITN proposals have been submitted this year as compared to 2007. One of the reasons for this development might be that there will be no call for this activity in 2009, so this year's call was the last opportunity before 2010. Furthermore, earlier in the year the NCP had contacted all unsuccessful Irish applicants from the 2007 call (co-ordinators and partners, more than 90 in total) and offered help in the preparation of a proposal for resubmission. The assurance that such assistance is available may have made a difference in the decision of some of the applicants as to whether they should resubmit or not.

The next major deadlines in the Marie Curie programme will be for the COFUND scheme (19th February 2009). In 2007 three proposals were submitted from Ireland, all of which have been successful and are just about finishing negotiations with the Commission. The three successful applicants were IRCSET, HRB and RCSI (representing the National Biophotonics Imaging Platform Ireland - NBIPI). HRB has just launched the first call for its HRB/Marie Curie cofunded postdoctoral fellowships (deadline on 23rd January 2009), the new NBIPI fellowship scheme will publish its first call in October (deadline probably in January 2009), and IRCSET will launch its new outgoing fellowship programme in November (first deadline in early 2009). This is of major significance as it represents leverage of exchequer research funds with EU money. We will be working to ensure that all of the funding agencies avail of this opportunity in 2009. In addition, the opportunity is there for the universities themselves to apply to this scheme based on SFI and PRTL funding.

1.5.3. European Network of National Contact Points for the 'People' (Marie Curie) Programme ("Mobility NCPs")

With considerable delay caused by issues related to the validation of participants and a last minute change of the legal entity hosting the Spanish NCP, the European Network of 'People' NCPs ("PeopleNetwork") has finally started its work on 1st August 2008. IUA's contribution to this project is as leader of one of the Work Packages. This WP is concerned with stakeholder feedback regarding the correspondence between the opportunities offered by the Marie Curie Actions and the rules related to them on the one hand, and the needs of different actors (researchers and research groups, academic institutions, industry partners) on the other. The official kick-off meeting for the project will take place in December in Tel Aviv.

1.5.4. FP7 National Support Structure

Since the beginning of FP7 the NCPs and National Delegates for the various FP7 programmes have been supported by a dedicated FP7 National Support Network coordinated by Enterprise Ireland. In monthly network meetings (IUA have hosted a number of these) participants have the opportunity to exchange experiences and coordinate their approach to individual institutions in order to increase efficiency and the impact of their activities, for example through joint presentations and events. As an example, a dedicated FP7 event was held in conjunction with a monthly network meeting at Tyndall at the end of June. This meeting combined presentations on specific subjects (in particular the COFUND scheme as well as some of the FP7 projects that network members themselves are involved in), short overviews of specific parts of FP7 (Health, People, NMP, ICT) and face-to-face meetings with (potential) applicants (the Marie Curie NCP was the one with the highest demand for such individual meetings). The IUA will participate in a similar event targeting researchers in the University of Limerick on 9th October.

1.6. Irish Researcher Mobility Office and Web Portal

1.6.1. Hosting Agreement Scheme and Database

The office has processed over 330 Hosting Agreements since February 2008 and the number of accredited organisations continues to grow. Both the Irish National Immigration Service (INIS) in the Department of Justice and the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) have worked with the office in successfully facilitating and fast tracking the admission of third country researchers and their families to Ireland for the purpose of carrying out research.

An extranet was launched in August which enables relevant key departments such as Immigration authorities, embassies and consulates access to an electronic database of all holders of hosting agreements. This is an important development which has been co-funded by Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment (DETE) and Department of Justice in ensuring that all relevant and updated information is accessible to both visa processing personnel and immigration authorities.

1.6.2. Network Meeting and Promotion

A meeting took place at the end of August to provide the network with updates and information on the Hosting agreement scheme, the job opportunities facility on the national portal researchcareersireland.com and to officially launch the Hosting agreement Extranet. The meeting was attended by research and HR representatives from each of the universities, WIT, DIT, RCSI and some industry organisations, Key personnel from the Office of Science and Technology, DETE and from INIS were also in attendance and actively participated in the session.

The Network Manager and Network Administrator are carrying out visits and presentations to each of the universities, Institutes of Technology and research active organisations and industry to ensure that the key services provided by the office and portal are communicated effectively,

1.6.3. Evaluation

The Evaluation Partnership, together with Deloitte Consulting, were commissioned by the European Commission's Directorate General for Research to carry out an evaluation of the information activities of the ERA-MORE (Euraxess) network. The main objective of this study is to assess the effectiveness of the Mobility Centres in different European Member States. Ireland, together with nine other European Member States, was selected and a consultant visited Ireland at the beginning of September to carry out interviews with representatives of different organisations and institutions. Those chosen were DCU, UCD, NUI Galway, WIT, DETE and HEA. Results will be disseminated before the end of the year.

1.6.4. Statistics

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

- 13,515 - Job Searches on the portal
- 230 - Job Applications made directly via the portal application facility but this does not reflect the large number of applications that have been made directly to organisations
- 2042- organisation profile searches have been made by registered users

There are now 2,950 users registered on the portal and this number is continuously growing.

1.6.5. EU Projects

1.6.5(i) MOREBRAIN

The IUA hosted the kick off meeting for the MOREBRAIN Project on the 7th and 8th July 2008. Partners from Israel, Iceland and Spain were in attendance and the project objectives were discussed and some deliverable dates were amended to ensure co-ordination of events with other European activities. The next project meeting will take place in March 2009 at the EURAXESS Conference in Potsdam where the partners will also deliver an information and Training session to the participants.

1.6.5(ii) ERA-MIND

Due to delays with contract negotiations with the European Commission, the commencement date of this project has been pushed back to 1st November, 2008. The kick off meeting will take place in the same month.

1.7. National Research Platform

1.7.1. Project Update

The two senior user working groups have identified the following objectives for a National Research Platform:

- Highlight the extent and quality of Ireland's research effort, and serve to attract the best researchers to Ireland
- Promote the research expertise, capabilities and innovation of the higher education and public research sector in Ireland
- Provide a platform to increase collaboration between industry and academia and in particular to allow development agency staff to facilitate such collaboration in key strategic areas
- Promote networking to make it easier for academics to set up interdisciplinary, inter-institutional and international research
- Explore and develop collaborative or contract opportunities that are of interest to industry and that may draw industry investment (direct or indirect)
- Attract post graduate students to double the number of PhD students
- Provide a platform for industry users to address specific research and innovation needs
- Provide Assessment/Benchmarking of research output to stakeholders
- Increase the base of information on the national research effort available to IDA Ireland executives in their marketing of Ireland for high tech foreign direct investment
- Promote the technology offers from the higher education and public research system and enhance the take up of licensing opportunities
- Generate bi-lateral agreement between the research entity and the companies that generate research activities, develop technologies or design products

1.7.2. Research Information Systems Conference – a Look at EU Best Practice

There was a Research Information Systems Conference in Trinity College Dublin on 4th September 2008 to look at EU best practice. Speakers came from Norway, Slovenia, Netherlands, Belgium and France provided an overview of developments in their countries. The Conference was formally opened by the Dr Jimmy Devins, Minister for Science Technology and Innovation.

1.7.3 Next Steps

There are approximately 4 (monthly) meetings remaining before the feasibility study needs to be written and submitted to the Interdepartmental committee for Science, Technology and Innovation for funding consideration. The Research Working group agreed that there needed to be further division of the group with specific responsibilities to ensure that all aspects of a National Research Platform were considered. The group have identified five areas of focus for all users and stakeholders involved in the project. All identified users and stakeholders will meet on 6th November, 2008 before splitting into five smaller groups which will focus on the following headings:

- Expertise
- Brokerage
- Resources
- Facts & Figures
- Funding

The Senior User Research group have agreed set up a sub committee to investigate research classifications and definitions, and propose a National set of definitions for agreement by all stakeholders.

1.8. Review of Ireland's Membership of EMBL

The Department of Enterprise has commissioned Forfás to conduct a review of Ireland's membership of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL). The members of the Steering Committee are:

Aidan Hodson DETE
Paul Roben EI
Barry O'Dowd IDA
Stephen Simpson SFI
Eucharia Meehan HEA
Conor O'Carroll IUA
Karen Hynes, Forfás
John McDonald, Forfás

The first meeting of the group will take place on 29th September 2008. The objective of the exercise is to examine the impact of membership of EMBL on research and researchers in Ireland. The consultant's report is expected at the end of November.

1.9. Major Conference on Technology Convergence – Meeting of Minds 17/18th June

This could be considered the most strategically important innovation conference this year in Ireland. It focused on how the emergence of converging technologies blurs the traditional lines between sectors. The conference presentations are available on line using the username and password (username: [mom08](#) and password: [tdh08mom](#)) via the link: http://www.ibec.ie/0/meeting_of_minds).

2. Strategic Innovation Fund

2.1. Irish Universities Study

The Geary Institute and the Irish Universities Association are conducting a three-year study of Irish students at undergraduate and postgraduate level as well as researchers in the Irish universities.

The survey was fielded in the seven universities on a total sample of 3,693 people. The survey was completed in June 2008. Data was immediately processed and the study teams gave a number of presentations including to the Registrars, Deans of Postgraduate Study, the Higher Education Research Group, the Deans of Research, the Confederation of Student Services in Ireland and the University Plenary throughout the summer.

The website has also been extensively updated (<http://geary.ucd.ie/ius>)

A first draft of a document giving details of the living and study situation of Irish PhD students is now in circulation for comments and suggestions.

A document describing the data on the taught programme students is also currently being drafted and will be circulated in October.

The second module of the student component of the survey has been programmed and is currently being tested and will be fielded in the seven universities in October.

The researchers survey has been developed over the last six months with the cooperation of academics and researchers. It is now in the final stages of programming and testing before launch. It will be fielded on the total population of universities researchers in mid October. Results will be presented before the New Year.

The first in a series of scoping documents related to the project was completed in draft form. This document addressed the issue of undergraduate research experience and informed the development of a module on undergraduate research experience in the second round of the student survey. Further briefing documents are being prepared on issues pertaining to students with very high ability and issues pertaining to student finance. These briefing are both directly relevant for policy-makers and also guide the development of questionnaire design.

[http://www.ucd.ie/economics/staff/ldelaney/Undergraduate Research Experience report 5.pdf](http://www.ucd.ie/economics/staff/ldelaney/Undergraduate%20Research%20Experience%20report%205.pdf)

Several further publications from the data are currently being prepared including documents on international students in Ireland; student time use; determinants of participation in exchange programmes; gender differences in earnings expectations. The work will be presented at several forums throughout the year including to all relevant

stakeholders and to external conferences (e.g. IUQB / IUA conference 14th/15th October 2008).

2.2. Full Economic Cost Project

The detailed design and implementation phase of the FEC project under SIF Cycle II is in progress. The IUA has appointed a central project manager who has been in place since the end of July. Each university has also appointed an FEC Manager and FEC managers have been meeting at three weekly intervals. Each university has been allocated responsibility for leading one of seven national projects. Significant progress has been made on all of these projects.

One of the key national projects relates to format and methodology in respect of Academic Activity Profiling (AAP). This project is being led jointly by UCC and DCU and considerable progress has been made in this regard. Working drafts of documents produced were considered by the HR Directors at a meeting on 18th September 2008 and no significant issues were identified.

Institutional steering groups are meeting on a regular basis to discuss and resolve implementation issues. A meeting of the Chairs of university steering groups has also been arranged for 13th October 2008.

In July, NUI Maynooth on behalf of the IUA issued a tender to acquire IT & costing consultancy services and appropriate software to support FEC implementation. Following review by an assessment panel one of the tenderers was invited to two detailed presentations at the IUA with some of the key stakeholder groups within the universities. Following this process the contract was awarded to SAS consultants.

The governance structure of the project is also currently being examined. The IUA SSI Group has overall oversight responsibility for the project however it is proposed that a National Advisory Group will be put in place to provide operational direction and decision making to the FEC project.

2.3. Strategic Planning & Decision Support Project

Work has commenced in respect of Phase II of this project which relates to the data definitions and data models to support KPI's. The working group will be presenting the outcome of their work at the next Steering Group meeting which has been scheduled for 15th October 2008.

3. Funding

3.1. Recurrent Funding

3.1.1. Current Funding

In late July 2008 universities were informed of reductions to their 2008 grant allocations and required savings to be achieved in 2009 arising from proposed cuts to grant allocations in 2009. The impact of these funding cuts is significant, particularly in the context of an already underfunded sector with a number of institutions already running deficits. The University Chief Finance Officers Group (UCFOG) has been working closely with IUA Council to examine and assess the impact of such cuts on university services and activities and to consider approaches to implementing cutbacks. This process is on-going and we await with interest the publication of the 2009 budget and estimates of public expenditure this month.

UCFOG has also supported IUA Council in their preparation for the meeting with the Minister for Education & Science on 24th September 2008. This work included developing proposals in respect of the introduction of a tuition fees/loans system and in respect of the tax based measures to support philanthropy and investment in universities. UCFOG will continue to work with IUA Council in developing proposals for a sustainable funding system for Irish universities.

3.1.2. Tuition Fee Increase Submission 2008/09

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 2008/09 noting that the increase required to cover the cost of known unavoidable cost increases was in the region of 6.2%. The Department of Education and Science has now subsequently approved an increase in the undergraduate tuition fee of up to 2.6% for the academic year 2008/09 and an increase in the charge for registration, examinations and student services from €25 to €900 however 75% of the amount of the increased revenue that will be generated by the increase in the student services charge will be clawed back by the DES through a reduction in the core grant. This represents a very significant shortfall and accordingly further cost efficiencies will be required in 2008/09.

3.1.3(i) Recurrent Grant Allocation Model

In September the HEA wrote to universities notifying them of changes in the approach to specific categories of students for the purposes of RGAM student returns. These are:

- To include non-EU postgraduate research (masters research and doctorate) students in the 2007/08 RGAM returns at an FTE weighting of 2.0. This change follows discussions on this issue over the last year.
- To increase the subject price group weighting allocated to masters taught students to an FTE of 1.5. This change was not previously discussed between IUA and the HEA.

Furthermore, the HEA proposed that students on work placements for the 2008-09 returns should be subject price group weighted at a maximum of 0.5, and requested views in relation to this matter.

As requested by IUA Registrars, a meeting was held with HEA staff on 2nd September 2008 in order to develop a “user’s handbook” for the completion and return of HEA RGAM data. A first draft from the HEA is expected for mid-October. The universities have been requested to propose a draft definition for the status of “non-EU research student”.

3.2. Pension Issues

3.2.1 *Proposed transfer of university pension schemes*

As reported previously in May 2008 the government approved in principle the proposal that the assets of the university pension funds and the liabilities of the schemes be taken over by the state subject to a number of conditions. All university Governing Authorities/Boards and where applicable Trustees have now agreed in principle to the proposal subject to the legislative detail. The proposal is continuing to be progressed through the HEA Pensions Working Group. A number of issues remain to be clarified. It is intended that the primary legislation would be enacted before the end of the year.

Operational issues arising from the proposed transfer have been considered by a number of IUA working groups. A summary of the key recommendations arising from these groups has been circulated. The recommendations will be forwarded to the HEA Pension Working Group for consideration.

3.2.2 *FRS 17 & University Financial Statements*

In light of the developments reported at 3.2.1 above UCFOG held separate meetings with both the university external auditors and the C&AG in relation to the application of FRS 17 (accounting for pensions) in university financial statements. It was hoped that the developments in relation to the transfer of university pension schemes would allow universities to satisfactorily address the FRS 17 issues. There remains however unresolved differences of interpretation between the external auditors and the C&AG and UCFOG will continue to work with both parties to ensure a satisfactory outcome to these issues.

3.3. Value for Money

Recent media coverage has alluded to the Minister for Education & Science commissioning a C&AG Value for Money Review of university expenditure. No formal notification or detail relating to such a review has yet been received.

Universities have independently of the media coverage been considering the potential for sectoral procurement savings. UCFOG has asked the University Procurement and

Contract Officers Group to examine and make proposals in respect of cost savings that could be achieved arising from a sectoral strategic procurement initiative.

3.4. Nursing & Midwifery

In September correspondence issued from the HSE indicated that the HSE would be maintaining 2008/09 fees at 2007/08 fee levels and would not be applying the agreed 2.6% fee inflator. At a follow up meeting with HSE it was noted that a DoHC review was being commissioned to look at the requirements and need for both under-graduate and post-graduate programmes in the context of overall numbers and geographical demand. It is intended that the Heads of Nursing and Registrar's would meet with the HSE to pursue these issues in further detail.

3.5. Taxation Issues

Further to the on-going consultations between the sector and the Revenue in relation to PAYE issues UCC made a submission on behalf of the sector to the Revenue in respect of these matters. The Revenue response has significant implications for payments to external examiners, quality reviewers, etc. This matter is now being escalated to the district inspector.

The universities continue to facilitate Revenue in relation to tax relief on tuition fees. Most universities have provided Revenue with the requested data in respect of 2007/08. The sector is continuing to work with Revenue in relation to developing the process for future years.

4. Borrowing Framework

A copy of the UCFOG submission to the HEA in relation to the proposed review of the Borrowing Framework under Section 38 of the Universities Act has been circulated.

5. Charities Bill 2007

The Charities Bill Working group continued to assess and consider the issues and implications arising from the Charities Bill. On 29th September 2008 members of the working group met with Arthur Cox solicitors and officials from the DES and Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs to raise a number of concerns. These primarily related to minimizing the administrative impact of the Bill on universities and also addressing some concerns in relation to university foundations and particularly in respect of public disclosure issues. The Department officials agreed to give consideration to the issues raised.

6. Access

6.1. IUA Equity of Access Project

6.1.1. HEAR 2009

The model of assessment (multi-indicator approach) has been agreed and signed-off by all participating institutions for 2009. The new indicators to be piloted in 2009 and an analysis of their impact will be undertaken. The scheme continues to operate with a select number of schools (circa 430 nationwide), based on their disadvantaged status and/or a link to one of the participating higher education institutions. With the full participation of NUI Galway in 2009 all schools in the BMW region and Co. Clare will have access to the scheme. The assessment of applications and management of data will be divided among Access Offices as in previous years. Plans for a national rollout of the scheme are currently being worked-out in detail, with final decision on implementation subject to sign-off by all participating institutions. The institutions have raised a number of concerns that need to be addressed over the coming months:

- Solutions to centralised management of the assessment process and all data
- Need to simplify and automate processes to manage growing volume of applications, while at the same time ensuring equity and academic standards
- Management of offers process in a national scheme
- Potential financial pressure on institutions in terms of the provision of post-entry supports to growing numbers of students to ensure the continued success of access programmes
- Future funding and governance of the scheme

Following the last IUA quarterly meeting of Registrars T.Cooke (DIT rep) and A.Galvin met with T.Boland & M.O'Connor (HEA) regarding the institutions' concerns about potential legal challenge and sought HEA advice on this matter. Tom Boland proposed that IUA write-up the proposed national scheme (clarifying criteria, indicators and key procedures) and present it to the HEA for endorsement. From there HEA would support IUA to progress the matter with DES to secure its backing at the highest level. IUA to action, once the key operational challenges of national scheme are worked through.

Revised structures have been put in place to steer the project through the implementation stage, including a refocused Advisory Group (chaired by D Redmond) and three working groups to look at Communications; Systems & Centralised Processing; and Policies & Procedures.

6.1.2. Supplementary Admission – Students with a Disability

The major development for 2009 is the introduction an online application form for applicants disclosing a disability on the CAO. The additional form will be seamlessly integrated into the CAO application process for the student disclosing a disability. Supporting evidence of disability will still have to be collected in hard copy and manually

processed. The assessment criteria for all sensory disabilities, physical disabilities and significant on-going illnesses are being revised (with expert input) for 2009. The disability officers propose to apply (and stick to) published deadlines in the management of the 2009 scheme, thus allowing sufficient time to assess applicants and ensure quality control.

6.1.3. Other Access Developments

The research commissioned to review Access/Foundation Courses is near completion. A first draft of the final report will be presented to Access Officers, IUA, IoTI, HEA and DES representatives on 14 October for consideration.

HEA has yet to undertake an in-depth analysis of the access data collected at Registration 2007. IUA representative continue to dialogue with HEA on weaknesses in the process and future management of the data collection. No further progress has been made by HEA regarding this data being collected from all CAO applicants.

Work is ongoing by DES on modernisation of the student grant – all institutions have been invited to supply key information on dates and suitable proxies for attendance to inform approach to be adopted.

7. National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

7.1. Placement of University Postgraduate Diplomas, Higher Diplomas, and minor, special purpose, and supplemental awards on the NFQ

In June 2008 the IUA informed the NQAI of the placement of the seven universities' Postgraduate Diplomas, Higher Diplomas, minor, special purpose and supplemental awards on the NFQ, according to the protocol agreed in 2006. Additional placements were made by UCC and UCD during the summer, and the IUA likewise informed the NQAI of these, as well as forwarding additional information provided by NUIG on its original list of placements. All these submissions were presented to the NQAI Authority on 24 September 2008 and a response is expected in due course.

7.2. IUA / NQAI Framework Implementation Network

The fourth meeting of the joint IUA / NQAI Framework Implementation Network took place on 22 September 2008, chaired by Prof. John Scattergood of TCD. The draft minutes of this meeting were circulated. The three working groups in this network are working on specific topics, see below, and are expected to produce draft reports which will be brought together as a network publication in mid 2009.

- *Working Group 1* - The importance of consistent award/programme titling and the basis for determination of award/programme Framework levels and links to quality assurance

- *Working Group 2* - Addressing assessment of learning outcomes: including academic and administrative dimensions
- *Working Group 3* - Designing and supporting the design of discipline-specific learning outcomes.

The next meeting of the Framework Implementation Network will take place in early December 2008.

7.3. Study of the Implementation and Impact of the National Framework of Qualifications

In early 2008, the NQAI embarked on a study on the implementation and impact of the NFQ, in order to assess the extent to which the National Framework of Qualifications is being implemented; support deeper implementation of the Framework and policies on access, transfer and progression; identify progress in implementation; identify gaps and drivers/obstacles in respect of implementation; assess the initial impact of the Framework. The study focuses primarily on the work of the Authority, awarding bodies and providers of education and training. The study is led by a Study Team chaired by Tom Collins of NUI Maynooth, and including representatives from Scotland (David Raffe, University of Edinburgh) and New Zealand (Frances Kelly, NZ Ministry of Education), as well as a retired assistant director of FÁS (Henry Murdoch).

The study will comprise papers on the state of development of the Framework, policies on access, transfer and progression, and assessment of impact by the Authority; reports from key stakeholder bodies responsible for implementing the Framework in the schooling, HETAC, FETAC and university sectors; case studies of implementation; submissions from the public; evaluation of inputs by a study team of national and international experts; and a synthesis report and recommendations by study team.

As part of this, the IUA has written the draft report from the university sector, following the outline proposal tabled for IUA Registrars on 14th April 2008. This report was based on

- Discussions in the IUA Registrars' group regarding NFQ implementation issues during the period 2006-2008;
- Documents provided to IUA by each university during 2007 and 2008 as part of the process of placing the university higher diplomas, postgraduate diplomas and minor, special purpose and supplemental awards on the Framework;
- Visits undertaken to the University of Limerick and to Dublin City University in July 2008 as part of preparing this report. The visit to DCU was held in conjunction with a visit by researchers from the European University Association investigating recent developments at Master level, as part of a Europe-wide study. Both visits involved meetings with senior management, academic leaders from a cross-section of

disciplines, and relevant administrative staff in the university registry, academic policy and development, and student service sections;

- A meeting organised on 20th May 2007 by IUA and HETAC with USI education officers from across the universities and several IoTs, in order to obtain student opinions and feedback for this report (and the HETAC report);
- Discussions within the NQAI/IUA-led Framework Implementation Network and its associated working groups during the period December 2007 to September 2008.

The draft reports from the universities, schools, FETAC and HETAC sectors as well as a background paper from the NQAI, are now available on the website http://www.nqai.ie/framework_study.html

Public submissions are invited to the study, and a consultative forum will be held on 18th November 2008 in Dublin. Further information on the study, the consultative forum and on the public submissions process is also available at the same website.

7.4. Bologna process

A new national team of Bologna Experts have recently been appointed by the HEA, on the basis of nominations by IUA, IoTI, NQAI and USI. The new team is composed of:

Dr. Norma Ryan, Director of Quality Promotion, UCC
Dr. Bairbre Redmond, Vice-Principal for Teaching and Learning, UCD
Dr. Sarah Moore, Dean of Teaching and Learning, UL
Mr. Hamidreza Khodabakhshi, former President Union of Students
Dr. Frank McMahon, Director of Academic Affairs, DIT
Dr. Brendan McCormack, Registrar, Institute of Technology Sligo
Ms June Hosford, Director, St. Nicholas Montessori College

At the suggestion of IUA and NQAI, greater synergies will be sought between the work of the Bologna Experts (and the resources made available for this) and the work of the NQAI/IUA Framework Implementation Network and the Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN). Specifically, it has been proposed that a workshop be held on the topic of supporting the design of discipline-specific learning outcomes, and the role of the Tuning projects (to be held January 2009). This workshop would provide an opportunity to explore how information on, and experience in, designing discipline-specific learning outcomes drawn from the Tuning projects could be utilised by those responsible for programme design in Ireland. Case studies in particular fields of learning and their application could be examined, including an arts/humanities discipline, as well a science/technology discipline.

A meeting of the national Bologna Process working group, in which IUA is a member, will meet on 9th October 2008 to discuss a first draft Irish national report on

implementation of the Bologna process, to be submitted in advance of the May 2009 Conference of Ministers in Louvain/Leuven.

8. Internationalisation / Work Permits

8.1. Work Permits

IUA has maintained contacts with DETE regarding an employment permit scheme for non-EEA students [see IUA Review April 2008], and DETE is preparing a revised proposal of this scheme (position unchanged since IUA review June 2008), which is expected to be published in Autumn 2008.

IUA has also learned (24th September 2008) that a Third Level Graduate Scheme has been in place since **April 2007** which enables “non-EEA third level graduates to remain in Ireland for six months after successfully completing their degree course and to seek employment during that period with a view to applying for a Green Card Permit or a Work Permit”. The IUA has requested that the Hosting Agreement be included as an option for those seeking to remain in Ireland, along with the Green Card and Work Permits.

8.2. Erasmus Mundus

It is understood that the European Commission will soon approve the inclusion of joint doctoral programmes within the Erasmus Mundus scheme. This represents a major opportunity for Irish HEIs and graduate schools and will need effective promotion and support to get good uptake in the early years. Given that there has been low levels of Irish participation in Erasmus Mundus so far (at master level), particularly in the last two years where no Irish partner has been involved in any of the successful bids, the IUA is working with the HEA (which receives resources from the EC for this) to plan greater promotion and communication of these opportunities.

9. Garda Vetting

The Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) has since mid-1997 refused to process applications from full-time students under the 18 years of age. The universities have met and corresponded regularly with GCVU on this issue, and most recently letters were sent on 1st and 18th August 2008 seeking clarity in advance of the 2008 CAO applications process. In late September the universities (and other colleges) had all the forms for those who are under 18 years returned to them unprocessed by GCVU.

Although a decision had not been made on this issue by the Garda Commissioner at the time of writing (6th October 2008), IUA had been informed that this was imminent. In the meanwhile, the universities have been obliged to contact these students to tell them that their may be issues for their placements and their degree programmes.

10. Communications / Events

10.1. Marketing the University Sector and IUA Services

10.1.1. 4th Level Ireland Website Development

Content for the new website of 4th Level Ireland has been uploaded and a working site created. Although some fine tuning is needed this site is progressing well and can be viewed on <http://www.designhouse.ie/4th-level/index.html>. Our aim is to have the site fully functional in time for the joint IUA/IUQB/UCD 4th Level conference on 14th/15th October.

10.1.2. Communications Group Meeting

The fourth meeting of the IUA Communications Group was held on 8th September and was attended for the first time by a number of press officers along with more senior Communications Managers. The main items discussed included the SIF II Access Project, successes of the Researcher Mobility Office (and its job advertising opportunities for the universities) and the Fees/Funding issue. Presentations were made to the group by Aine Galvin, Manager of the SIF II Access Project where she outlined the rationale behind the scheme, future steps and the role of the Communications offices in the ongoing promotion of the scheme. Jennifer Cleary, Manager of the Researcher Mobility Office explained the work of the office and portal and outlined the benefits to the universities of advertising their research jobs on the www.researchcareersireland.com portal. Ned Costello joined the meeting to discuss a communications plan around the Fees/Funding issue. It was agreed that the IUA would take the lead in communicating the sector's views.

10.1.3. Formation of 'Access' Communications Working Group

At the meeting volunteers were requested for a short term communications working group. The initial task of the group will be to develop a communications plan for the scheme. Melda Slattery from DIT and Deirdre Watters from NUI Maynooth have volunteered to join the group which will allow the communication planning process to begin in earnest.

10.1.4. HEA Briefing Day Sept 3rd 2008 (Irish Indo advertising proposal)

On 3rd September the HEA held their second briefing meeting of 2008. The meeting was open to all communications personnel in the Third Level Sector and was intended as a networking event as well as the imparting of information by senior HEA Managers on key issues for the coming year including; National Strategy on Higher Education; PRTL 10 year celebrations and Cycle 5, National Access Strategy, Fulbright Commission and a Presentation by John Walshe (education correspondent) and Cliona Carroll (recruitment manager) of Independent News and Media. The Irish Independent proposal outlined the possibility for discounted advertising rates and a weekly editorial platform for 3rd and 4th

Level issues. We have since been contacted by the Irish Times who interest to pursue a proposal along similar lines.

10.2. Events

10.2.1. Research Information Systems: a look at EU best practice

On 4th September, Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation, Dr Jimmy Devins opened the Research Information Systems Conference at the Science Gallery in Trinity College Dublin. The conference is an integral part of the SIF II National Research Platform Project. The goal of the project is to carry out a scoping exercise on the viability of a web based platform where all publicly funded research projects and information can be found at one location and will be ordered in a user-friendly way meaning that users don't have to browse individual websites to find out what R&D is being undertaken in Ireland. The platform could be used to highlight the extent and quality of the Irish research effort to National and International audiences. The event was extremely successful and has resulted in Minister Devin's request to talk to IUA in greater depth about its Research activities in a meeting scheduled for 7th October.

Presentations made at the event can be accessed on:

<http://www.iua.ie/media-and-events/events-conferences/events/2007/ResearchInfoSystemsEventSept08.html>

10.2.2. Joint IUA/IUQB/UCD 4th Level Conference

This conference will be held in O'Reilly Hall, UCD on the 14th and 15th October. Titled, "Opportunities and Challenges in Developing 4th Level Education" the conference themes will include –

1. Overarching Trends such as drivers for development of new models of PhD programmes including Global, Supranational, National, Regional and Institutional.
2. Quality Assurance, Evaluation and Review including student progression and completion, supervisor training etc.
3. Skills Acquisition and Career Options

Full details on the conference and registration can be accessed on <https://www.gowestconferences.ie/IUQB2008>

10.2.3. Irish Science Open Forum Expo

The ISOF Expo 2008 to be held in the Industries Hall of the RDS, Dublin on the 14th and 15th November has been cancelled. The ISOF Steering Committee are in talks with SFI regarding the future of the event

10.3. Publications

10.3.1. Graduate Student Skills Statement

This skills statement is a key output of the SIF Fourth Level Ireland project, and describes the desired learning outcomes and skills that PhD students may develop during their studies. The brochure is in development at the moment and will be available for download from the IUA website and hard copies will be sent to all graduate offices on completion. The Skills Statement will feature prominently on the website of the Graduate Studies offices and will be a quality mark on PhD provision in Irish Universities.

10.4. Media

10.4.1. Press Releases and Statements

- Press Statement in response to Minister O’Keeffe’s comments on reintroduction of fees, 11th August 2008
- Press Release, 4th September 2008
“Window to Irish Research: the creation of a national research website”
- Press Release Post Ministerial Meeting, 24th September 2008
“University Presidents seek commitment from Minister to work with them on a new funding plan: alternative is long term damage to students and the economy.”
- Letter to the Editor, Irish Times, 26th September 2008

10.4.2. Press Coverage of the Fees/Funding Issue resulting from an IUA release/statement

As part of our ongoing campaign to highlight the under-funding of the universities our press coverage has been very comprehensive over the past few months and a small selection is listed below. Interviews with Hugh Brady on the funding issue have also featured on RTE News and RTE’s Week in Politics programmes. Hugh Brady and Ned Costello have also given numerous interviews to national and regional radio

- Irish Times, 12th August 2008
“University Heads back debate on return of fees”
- Irish Times, 23rd September 2008, Front Page
“University Heads want fees paid by student loans”
- Irish Times, 23rd September 2008. Op Ed
“Loans and top-up charges could solve funding issue”
- Irish Times, 24th September 2008
“O’Keeffe to discuss student loan plan with universities”

- Irish Independent, 25th September 2008
“Cuts will trigger brain drain of top academics”
- Irish Examiner, 25th September 2008
“University Presidents warn over impact of funding cut”
- Irish Times, 26th September 2008
Ned Costello Letter to the Editor

10.4.3. Press Coverage of Research Issues

Press coverage of research issues include:

- Digital Ireland – Irish Independent Thursday, 25th September 2008
“Ambitious plan to make Irish research available across the world”
- Silicon Republic online, 5th September 2008
“New Platform to make Irish research available across the world”
- Sunday Tribune Business Section, 28th September 2008
“More needs to be done to attract talented researchers to Ireland”

10.4.4. Education Features

Education Matters Yearbook, July 2008
“Overview of Third Level Education in 2007/2008”

Education Magazine, July 2008
“Development of 4th Level Ireland”

Online Guide to Education in Ireland, published August 2008
“Irish Universities: Focus on Excellence in Education and Research while delivering a great student experience”
<http://www.i-studentadvisor.com/isa/volume4/eire/education/education-volume4.html>

11. EUA

As foreseen at its creation in 2001, the EUA statutes had been under review during 2006-07 and new statutes were adopted at the General Assembly in March 2008. The aim of these new statutes is to enhance the impact of EUA, to clarify membership criteria to ensure membership of universities offering quality-assured degree programme and with a significant research base, and to improve the functioning of EUA.

New elections for EUA Board and President will take place in March 2009 and October 2008 respectively. Sijbolt Noorda (former President, University of Amsterdam) and Jean-Marc Rapp (former Rector, University of Lausanne) are the two candidates for EUA President.

Current noteworthy EUA activities underway include:

- A study on new trends in HE governance and autonomy
- Development of the EUA Council on Doctoral Education launched in May 2008, aimed at identifying and promoting good practice, and strengthening the international dimension of doctoral programmes
- 2nd phase of EUA Doc Careers project explores the link between doctoral education and career development
- A draft Lifelong Learning Charter for European Universities has been drawn up and will be discussed at the EUA conference in Rotterdam, 24-25 October 2008.
- Studies on masters programmes and joint programmes are underway
- The preparation has begun for the EUA Trends VI study, on the universities' view on the future development and direction of the Bologna Process post-2010.

12. Quality Assurance

12.1. IUQB Matters

12.1.1. IUQB Meetings

A meeting of the IUQB Board took place in the University of Limerick on 29th September 2008. It was agreed that the practice of holding one of the Board meetings per year in one of the universities will be continued.

12.1.2. IUQB AGM The IUQB Annual General Meeting took place in the National University of Ireland, Maynooth on 23rd June 2008.

12.1.3. External Review of IUQB Commissioned by the HEA

The Report of the expert panel who undertook this review was published by the HEA (who commissioned the review at the request of IUQB) on 24th September 2008. The responses of the IUQB and the HEA to the review report were also published. These may be viewed on the IUQB website at

http://www.iuqb.ie/news/latest_news.aspx?article=6288c85b-31a4-457c-8b99-04bb7a025101 and on the HEA website at: <http://www.heai.ie/en/IUQBreview>

12.1.4. IUQB Budget 2009

Following the recommendation in the Quality Review of IUQB that “*priority should be given by the universities, IUA and the HEA to establishing an agreed medium term*

budgetary framework for the IUQB in the form of an agreed medium-term core budget”, it will be necessary for IUQB, HEA and IUA to meet in the autumn to progress this matter.

12.1.5. IUQB Review Activity

IUQB is progressing the review of the Organisation of PhD Programmes in the Irish Universities in a two-stage process. The first stage will involve updating the 2005 *IUQB National Guidelines for Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities*. An expert panel is being formed to assist in the updating of the guidelines, including members from each of the Irish universities. Following the updating of the guidelines (by March 2009), the review stage will commence.

A consultation process is underway with institutions in relation to the 2nd Cycle of institutional reviews which will commence in 2009 (following the 1st Cycle in 2004). The review process will be finalised following consultation with the institutions, HEA and NQAI, as required by national legislation. The process will incorporate recommendations arising from the recent quality review of IUQB.

12.1.6. IUQB Conference 2008

The 6th Annual IUQB Conference will be held in the O’Reilly Hall, UCD on 14th and 15th October 2008. The event with the theme of *Opportunities and Challenges in Developing 4th Level Education* is being organised as a joint conference of IUQB and the IUA 4th Level Network.

12.1.7. Sectoral Project Activities:

The IUQB publications *National Guidelines for Strategic Planning in Academic Units in Irish Universities* and *National Guidelines for Institutional Research in Irish Higher Education* were launched by Mr. Tom Boland, Chief Executive of the HEA, in the IUQB Offices on 30th June 2008. The publications represent the 3rd and 4th sets of National Guidelines published by IUQB since 2005.

12.1.8. IUQB Nationally and Internationally

The CEO made a presentation on *Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines - view from the QA agency side - in an Irish context* to the HEA Bologna Information Seminar in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin on 26th June.

The CEO co-chaired a session on *Quality & Accountability Questions in Higher Education: Efficacy of Quality Assurance Mechanisms* at the IA HERO Meeting on 15th - 17th September in Portland, Oregon.