

IUA Review [09/4] for IUA Meetings in University of Limerick on 12th October, 2009

	Section	Page No.
1.	Research	4.
1.1.	Research Policy and Funding Overview	4.
1.2.	Researcher Careers	4.
1.2.1.	<i>Researcher Careers Framework [RCF]</i>	4.
1.2.2.	<i>European Developments</i>	4.
1.3.	Science Foundation Ireland	5.
1.4.	Fourth Level Ireland Network Group	5.
1.4.1.	<i>Erasmus Mundus II</i>	5.
1.4.2.	<i>Higher Education Research Group - Working Group on Research Capacity</i>	5.
1.4.3.	<i>Fourth Level Ireland Network and Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance</i>	6.
1.4.4.	<i>EUA Council for Doctoral Education</i>	6.
1.4.5.	<i>Activities for the Next Period</i>	6.
1.5.	European / International Funding	7.
1.5.1.	<i>Seventh Framework Programme / IUA Marie Curie Office</i>	7.
1.5.2.	<i>'People' (Marie Curie) Programme – Participation and Results</i>	7.
1.5.3.	<i>'People' (Marie Curie) Programme – Upcoming Calls and Deadlines</i>	9.
1.5.4.	<i>'Research Potential' Programme</i>	9.
1.6.	EURAXESS Ireland (Irish Researcher Mobility Office) and Web Portal	9.
1.6.1.	<i>Official Launch and Statistics</i>	9.
1.6.2.	<i>Hosting Agreement Scheme and Extranet</i>	10.
1.6.3.	<i>Presentations</i>	10.
1.6.4.	<i>EU Projects</i>	10.
1.6.4.(a)	<i>ERA-MIND</i>	10.
1.6.4.(b)	<i>MOREBRAIN</i>	11.
1.7.	Research Integrity	11.
2.	Strategic Innovation Fund	11.
	Full Economic Cost Project	
	Irish Universities Study	
	Funding	
	Recurrent Funding	

	<i>Current Funding</i>	
	<i>Tuition Fee Increase Submission 2009/10</i>	
	<i>Pension Issues</i>	
	<i>Proposed Transfer of University Pension Schemes</i>	
	<i>FRS 17 and University Financial Statements</i>	
	<i>University Model Pensions</i>	
	<i>Shared Services</i>	
	<i>Sectoral Procurement Initiatives</i>	
	<i>Taxation Issues</i>	
	<i>PAYE Issues</i>	
	<i>Commission on Taxation</i>	
	<i>Financial Reporting and Audit</i>	
	Conference on “Governance in the University Sector”	
	Seminar on “Irish Copyright Law”	
	Statements of Internal Control	
	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland	
	Placement of University postgraduate Diplomas, Higher Diplomas, and Minor, Special Purpose, and Supplemental Awards on the NFQ	
	Framework Implementation and Impact Study Report	
	IUA / NQAI Framework Implementation Network	
	Referencing of Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)	
8.	Internationalisation	19.
8.1.	Education Ireland	19.
8.2.	Proposed New Immigration Regime for non-EEA Students	20.
9.	Lifelong Learning, Upskilling	20.
10.	EUA	21.
10.1.	New EUA Report on Quality Assurance: need to allow space for risk-taking	21.
11.	IUA Communications / Events	22.
11.1.	Media Relations	22.
11.1.1.	<i>Recent Press Releases and Coverage</i>	22.
11.1.2.	<i>EU Commission Director General for Research Launches euraxess.ie – 8th Sept 2009</i>	22.

11.2.	Communications for SIF Projects	23.
<i>11.2.1.</i>	<i>Launch of the Higher Education Access Scheme – 8th Sept. 2009</i>	<i>23.</i>
<i>11.2.2.</i>	<i>Launch of the Disability Access Route to Education – 6th Oct. 2009</i>	<i>24.</i>
11.3.	Marketing the University Sector and IUA Services	24.
11.4.	Upcoming Events	25.
11.5.	IUA Extranet	25.

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1. Research

1.1. Research Policy and Funding Overview

With existing cuts on R&D budgets and the publication of the McCarthy Report, the SSTI has effectively gone on hold awaiting the budget. The position of the Department of Finance as expressed at the HERG meeting on 17th September 2009 is that all of the McCarthy recommendations will be implemented.

In terms of cutbacks, all of the funding agencies have reported that it would not be legally possible to reduce existing commitments. There is a strong possibility that the agencies will co-ordinate an overall reduction in any new calls and commitments. This will include a reduction of the PhD stipend and researcher salaries. All are implementing limitations on PhD fees with a ceiling of 3% annual increments. The HRB have already cancelled all salary increments.

The VPDOR Group is deeply concerned with the implications of any cuts in PRTL15. A significant part of this funding is capital and will lead to infrastructure that will only begin in 2011 and be delivered in 2013. Any cutbacks on capital will have a serious long term impact on the ability of the sector to meet national targets

1.2. Researcher Careers.

1.2.1. *Researcher Careers Framework [RCF]*

Following a long delay since last April due to the Employment Control Framework [ECF], the DES circulated the Researcher Careers Framework proposal to the HERG. This document had been significantly revised following input from the IUA. At the HERG meeting on 17th September, 2009 it was agreed that it is now important to agree this as a framework for implementation without commitment to all of the details. This was discussed at the SSI meeting on 21st September and it was agreed that the IUA Research Career Group should meet and take a decision as it is important, given the long interim delay, to progress this as soon as possible. The RCF will be discussed at HERG again on 28th October.

1.2.2. *European Developments*

Under the umbrella of the Researcher partnership [RP], a European-wide description of research career categories and description is being developed. The European Working Group on Training and Skills responsible for this development is chaired by the IUA [Conor O'Carroll], and the 4th Level National Co-ordinator [Westley Forsythe] is

providing expert input. We will circulate the first draft structure for comment by the university sector. This provides us with a real opportunity to shape European policy on research careers.

1.3. Science Foundation Ireland

The IUA is working with SFI to develop a proposal for funding by the FP7 Marie Curie COFUND Programme. This would allow SFI to supplement its own programmes with European funding up to a value of €5m. With the advice of IUA, SFI is also considering how it can promote participation in this programme by consortia already funded by SFI (CSET's, etc).

1.4. Fourth Level Ireland Network Group

1.4.1. *Erasmus Mundus II*

In February the HEA organised an information day for potential applicants to the second cycle of Erasmus Mundus. The European Commissions' Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), manages the Erasmus Mundus programme. This cycle involves significant funding for joint doctoral and master programmes. The Fourth Level Network identified potential university applicants to this significant funding stream and provided them with the event's details. The results of Irish applications for Master and Doctoral programmes are as follows:

Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses

There were 182 EMMC applications. Of these, 170 were eligible and assessed by independent experts, among these were two EMMCs co-ordinated by Irish HEIs, and fourteen had Irish HEI partners. The independent experts selected fifty EMMCs.

Six Masters Courses with Irish partners were selected - DIT 2, UCD 2, TCD 1, UL 1. This is an improved result on the first round of Erasmus Mundus I in 2004 when two Irish EMMCs were selected.

Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorates

The EACEA received 135 applications. Of these 129 were eligible and assessed by independent experts; Irish HEIs co-ordinated five and eleven had Irish partners. Independent reviewers supported thirteen EMJDs. No EMJDs either co-ordinated by, or with Irish HEI partners, were supported. At least one Irish EMJD proposal intends to re-apply for support in 2010.

The IUA will continue to liaise with the HEA on the 2010 call for applications.

1.4.2. *Higher Education Research Group - Working Group on Research Capacity*

The Network Coordinator, IUA Director of Research and Network Chair will continue to represent the Network and the IUA on the HERG working group on Research Capacity. The working group will consider the outcome of the HEA structured PhD education review and the realisation of SSTI targets. Of particular importance will be the

consideration of PhD fees inflation and the universities' explanation for an average sectoral inflation since 2004 of 9.37 per cent. The working group will consider challenges to achieving SSTI research capacity target.

1.4.3. Fourth Level Ireland Network and Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance.

During the summer, the Network and the DRHEA liaised on the development of guiding principles for development and delivery of inter-institutional graduate programmes. This will ensure that procedures to facilitate inter-institutional programmes DRHEA and non DRHEA HEIs are possible. In September, the DRHEA agreed on guiding principles for the delivery of inter-institutional graduate programmes. A copy of the guiding principles is available from Dr Emer Cunningham of UCD's Graduate Studies Office (emer.cunningham@ucd.ie).

1.4.4. EUA Council for Doctoral Education

The Network Coordinator attended the EUA Council for Doctoral Education in Lausanne, in June. The event explored potential collaborations on supervision, research careers, internationalisation and data collection.

1.4.5. Activities for the Next Period

Annual Fourth Level Conference

The second annual Fourth Level Network conference will take place on 10th & 11th November in Trinity College Dublin. The review panel has received a very large number of abstract submissions for this event. Prof. Jon Butler, Howard R. Lamar Professor of American Studies, History, and Religious Studies and Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Yale, will deliver the keynote address.

Prof. Butler will discuss Yale's participation in the US Council for Graduate Schools 'PhD Completion Project'. More information on the 'PhD Completion Project' is available at [[http://www.phdcompletion.org/.](http://www.phdcompletion.org/)]

The conferences will in particular address structured PhD programme developments, the student experience and student support. Further information is available at [<http://www.4thlevelireland.ie/press/conference-2009.php>]

Forfás Review of Arrangements to Encourage the Exploitation of Intellectual Property

Forfás are also conducting an exercise to review arrangements to encourage the exploitation of IP emanating from HEIs. This will explore how the universities and others have implemented the 2006 guidelines and examine if there is sufficient resources to implement the guidelines. It will also identify obstacles and ways of overcoming them. The consultation phase is due to take place during September and October this month with a draft report available in December. The IUA have requested that Forfás involve both the VPs Research and Deans of Graduate Studies in this exercise.

Fulbright Commission

The Network coordinator is working with the Fulbright Commission on means of communication and promoting the funding available for Irish graduate students and scholars to undertake research in the US and funding schemes for US graduate students and scholars to study in Ireland.

1.5. European / International Funding

1.5.1. *Seventh Framework Programme / IUA Marie Curie Office*

Since the previous IUA Review, the last few months have been dominated by a number of major deadlines: one for the Marie Curie Industry-Academia Partnerships and Pathways (IAPP) scheme on 27th July, and the deadlines for the three Marie Curie Individual fellowship schemes – [Intra-European Fellowships (IEF), International Outgoing Fellowships (IOF) and International Incoming Fellowships (IIF)] on 18th August. Apart from hands-on assistance to researchers preparing proposals for those schemes and ongoing support to contractors and fellows in Marie Curie projects in general, the National Contact Point also contributed to a number of events related to the Marie Curie Actions programme:

- In early June the NCP travelled to Prague to give a presentation in the framework of a CORTEX Training Course (CORTEX is an FP6 Marie Curie Early Stage Training Site).
- In August she followed an invitation to contribute a talk at the Annual Conference of the association “European Women in Mathematics” in Novi Sad (Serbia). She also took the opportunity to discuss with local researchers from the Faculty of Science about potential collaborations with Irish research groups in one of the upcoming “Research Potential” calls.
- The NCP was also an invited speaker at the launch event for the Marie Curie co-funded INSPIRE scheme run by IRCSET. A report from the event can be found on the IRCSET website at [\[http://www.ircset.ie/Default.aspx?tabid=240. \]](http://www.ircset.ie/Default.aspx?tabid=240)
- An invited contribution to a Workshop on “Science careers and mobility” at the Euroscience Mediterranean Event 2009 in Athens in October had to be declined.

At the end of October, Dagmar Meyer will be leaving her post as NCP at the IUA to take up a new position at the European Commission.

1.5.2. ‘People’ (Marie Curie) Programme – Participation and results

The results for the IRSES call (Marie Curie International Research Staff Exchange Scheme) which closed earlier this year have been very good. In total 178 proposals were submitted across Europe, of which five were coordinated by Irish organisations. Three further proposals had Irish partners. Four of the Irish-led proposals and all of the proposals led by non-Irish institutions but involving Irish partners have been successful. This is a success rate of 87.5% for participations and 80% for coordinators, which is clearly above the overall success rates of 64.6% and 66.1% respectively.

Detailed results for the Reintegration Grants (first cut-off 2009) have still not been released, but feedback from Irish applicants has been extremely encouraging so far, with various International Reintegration Grants coming to Ireland from that call.

One Irish proposal had been submitted to the “Researchers Night” call and was evaluated positively. Ireland is also represented in the consortium that submitted a proposal under the 2009 Euraxess call, through the Euraxess Ireland office run by the IUA. This proposal has been retained for funding.

No official data regarding numbers of applicants etc. in the recently closed IAPP call are available yet. However, according to unofficial numbers the interest in this scheme has increased dramatically. While in 2007 and 2008 only 101 respectively, 141 proposals had been submitted across Europe, the number went up to 357 for this year’s call, of which 22 were led by Irish coordinators (compared to 9 in 2008 and only 2 in 2007). Altogether 41 Irish partners are involved in 28 proposals (compared to 26 in 2008 and only five in 2007). These numbers mean that in terms of coordinators, Ireland is fifth behind the much larger countries UK, Spain Italy and Germany. Although due to the much higher participation rate in this year’s call the success rate is likely to decrease to about 20% (from about 30% in 2008 and 40% in 2007), it can be expected that a good number of Irish researchers and organisations will be involved in successful IAPP proposals from the latest call.

With regard to the Individual Fellowship schemes, no numbers specifically for Ireland are available yet, but some overall statistics have been made available by the Commission. For all three Individual fellowship schemes the numbers indicate a sharp increase in interest, especially for the International Incoming Fellowship scheme, which is now the scheme to be chosen also by Europeans who apply from a Third Country (previously they were covered by the Intra-European Fellowship scheme):

<i>IxF</i>	<i>proposals 2008</i>	<i>budget (M€)</i>	<i>proposals 2009</i>	<i>budget (M€)</i>	<i>increase in proposals</i>	<i>increase in budget</i>
IEF	1,763	75	2,404	95	36.4%	26.7%
IOF	445	25	598	28	34.4%	11.2%
IIF	665	25	1,039	28	56.2%	11.2%
total	2,873	125	4,041	151	40.7%	20.8%

Since the available budget per scheme did not increase to the same degree as the number of proposals, while the base rate for the living allowance has increased, it can be expected that the success rates for all three schemes will be quite a bit lower than in previous years.

Recently collected statistics on the amounts of funding received by Irish institutions and organisations from FP7 show that Ireland has been exceptionally successful in the Marie

Curie programme over the first two years of FP7 (2007-08). The total amount of funding allocated to Ireland from those two years under the ‘People’ (Marie Curie) programme alone has been close to €23m.

1.5.3 ‘People’ (Marie Curie) Programme – Upcoming Calls and Deadlines

The next calls that are of particular interest are the one for the Marie Curie Initial Training Networks (deadline on 22nd December 2009), the COFUND call (deadline on 18th February 2010) and the IRSES call (deadline on 25th March 2010). Other upcoming calls and deadlines are the call for the Researchers’ Night (deadline on 13th January 2010) and the Reintegration Grants (first/second cut-off in 2010 on 9th March/7th September respectively). The next deadline for the Individual fellowships will again be in the summer (17th August 2010).

A seminar on the Initial Training Networks took place at TCD in September and all applicants from 2008 have been contacted and alerted to the changes in the call as compared to the previous year, in case they consider resubmitting their proposal. Discussions are underway with SFI regarding their possible participation in the COFUND scheme (despite an initial expressions of interest it seems unlikely that there will be a proposal from a consortium of universities similar to the successful CEMP proposal led by RCSI in the first round of COFUND).

1.5.4 ‘Research Potential’ Programme

Ireland is not eligible to participate in most of the calls issued under “Research Potential”, except as “associated partners”. However, under the special “Mediterranean Partner Countries” call (FP7-REGPOT-2009-2) partners from non-convergence regions in Member States / Associated Countries were also allowed to participate as full beneficiaries. Two Irish organisations were partners in projects submitted to this call (one SME and one university) but neither of them was successful.

1.6. EURAXESS Ireland (Irish Researcher Mobility Office) and Web Portal

1.6.1. Official Launch and Statistics

As part of his two day visit to Ireland, the European Commission’s Director General for Research, Mr José Manuel Silva Rodríguez officially launched the re-branded office EURAXESS Ireland and portal www.euraxess.ie

This event was attended by members of the Irish research community and hosted by the IUA on 8th September. There are now a total of **3,946** registered users on the portal who receive regular updates on job and funding opportunities. A large portion of this statistic is shared between Post Doc and Post Graduate Researchers.

The [euraxess.ie](http://www.euraxess.ie) portal operates a research job opportunities and funding advertising facility for academic institutions, research agencies and organizations. Statistical analysis collated prior to the preparation of this report can be summarized as follows:

- 19,380 Job Searches on the portal – a remarkable increase on the last report.
- 312 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
- 2,935 Organisation profile searches have been made by registered users

1.6.2. *Hosting Agreement Scheme and Extranet*

The office has processed **710** Hosting Agreements to date with a total of **20** accredited organisations including all Irish universities and six Institutes of Technology and two from Industry (LM Ericsson Ltd and Solar Print Ltd.) have received their certificate of accreditation from the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment. 90% of all hosting agreements approved have been issued to researchers employed by the universities. There are currently **495** researchers working on their research projects under the hosting agreement scheme in Ireland.

The top two non EEA nationalities with hosting agreements are from **India and China** issued with **130 and 126** agreements respectively. They are followed by **US citizens** issued with **91** hosting agreements to date. There are **36** researchers with **Russian**; **29** with **Australian**, and **28** with **Canadian** citizenship employed under the scheme in Ireland. The other 56 non EEA countries have a small number of researchers with hosting agreements in Ireland.

To date, **316** researchers have availed of the immediate family unification opportunity and have their dependants with them for the duration of their research projects in Ireland.

1.6.3. *Presentations*

An overview of relevant Mobility support and services for Researchers was presented at the official ‘kick-off’ event for IRCSET’s INSPIRE International Mobility Fellowships on 4th September.

1.6.4. *EU Projects*

1.6.4.(a) *ERA-MIND*

The ERA-MIND - *European Research Area Mobile Researchers in Industry Project* was developed to improve the quality and coherence of EURAXESS Services to industry organisations and researchers in industry. This is a collaborative project funded by the European Commission with partners from Netherlands, Italy and Turkey.

IUA’s involvement is to determine the specific needs and expectations of industry with regard to the services provided by the Euraxess Services network. In addition, it is involved in strengthening the communication and co-ordination between industry stakeholders and the service centres. Lastly, to provide training to Euraxess network partners in order to better respond to the expectations and needs identified.

A Mapping document of industry needs and expectations has been produced and published as part of the work package deliverables. In addition, numerous information sessions and co-ordination meetings have been scheduled to take place in Q4 2009 and throughout 2010. A network of ‘Industry end users’ has been co-ordinated by the IUA and a number of requests have been sent to further identify a large pool from various disciplines and backgrounds to ensure a well represented and balanced network. The project will benefit from this network to develop a common strategy and tools for serving industrial organizations and mobile researchers in industry.

1.6.4(b) MOREBRAIN

This EU funded project is designed to develop new means of working with the research diaspora. It is a collaboration by the IUA with partners in Israel, Spain and Ireland. IUA is responsible for a key part of this project; a questionnaire that will be disseminated to researchers across Europe and the US through internet survey techniques. The IUA has developed the questionnaire and is now finding a tendering process to choose suitable organisation to run the survey and analyse the data.

1.7. Research Integrity

The IUA has collaborated with the RIA, HEA, HRB and SFI to host a workshop on Research Integrity. The objective is to develop a national system for Research Integrity in Ireland. The IUA is participating in a project led by the European Science Foundation [ESF] to develop European best practice in this area - www.ria.ie/policy/working-groups.html#researchintegrity

2. Strategic Innovation Fund

2.1. Full Economic Cost Project

The Full Economic Cost SIF Cycle II project which involves the detailed design and implementation of an FEC model across all universities continues to progress.

A template FEC Model has been developed and is currently being tailored/customised by the individual FEC Managers to reflect institutional variances (e.g. the structure within a university), to create each of the institutional models. The institutional models are due to be complete in late October and will be used to run data for pilot 1.

The project has not been without its significant challenges and in particular the collection of Academic Activity Profiling (AAP) data has been problematic due to the lack of comprehensive engagement of staff in the data collection process.

Significant lessons have been learned from the AAP process to date and these have been reflected in the proposed approach to AAP data collection for the next phases of the project. However the on-going viability or success of the project will require a significant improvement in the comprehensiveness of the data collection, and a resolution of the industrial relations issues which are impeding this.

The National Steering Group will continue to work through these issues.

2.2. Irish Universities Study

- The results of the first survey round have been published and reported on in the press—www.iua.ie/iua-activities/studentfeedback.htm
- The second round survey is complete and the data has been disseminated to all of the universities through the Steering Group. A question of reports (Undergraduate and Taught masters, PhD Students and International Students) are under preparation.
- The third survey is currently with the Steering Group for comments and it is planned to launch this in late October.
- The Research Survey has reached a response of over 600 out of a total of 3,000 researchers. We are aiming to achieve 1,000 responses by a major effort aimed to reach out to new hires across the universities.

2.3. Equity of Access Project

Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) & Disability Access Route to Higher Education (DARE)

- The development stage of the SIF-funded project is now coming to a close and all the key milestones have been achieved or are close to being completed.
- Preliminary data is now available on HEAR 2009. Data on DARE 2009 will be available at the end of November when UL completes a full evaluation of admittance. 680 HEAR applicants and circa 280 DARE accepted a place in one of the participating Institutions. These outcomes are consistent with 2008. HEAR analysis of the 2009 intake shows that multi-indicator approach has been robust and effective in reaching the HEAR target groups. 82% of HEAR students come from the target groups identified by the National Access Office (non-manual, semi & unskilled and agricultural workers). 58% of those who have accepted a place come from a DEIS school. In addition, 200 of the 680 students live in one of the nine most underrepresented urban areas/counties in the state.
- External independent Appeals Boards were convened for both schemes. 293 HEAR applicants made an appeal of which 19 were successful; 19 DARE applicants submitted an appeal and 3 were upheld. Clarity on this function is required for 2010 to ensure the public is aware that the aim is to review cases for administrative error rather than to make an appeal on the basis of personal circumstances.
- The national communications campaign commenced for HEAR in NUIM on 8th September and for DARE in UCC on 6th October. These events mark the start of an intense 5 month initiative to reach prospective applicants and also to ensure that ineligibility due to incomplete documentation will be kept to a minimum; this was a

lesson learnt in 2009. A key tool in this communication campaign has been the development of a website - www.accesscollege.ie

- All the Colleges of Education are participating in HEAR 2010 and Mater Dei Institute has also joined the DARE scheme. Discussions regarding the participation of all the other Colleges of Education in DARE 2011 have begun.
- The new criteria for assessing DARE (by category of Disability) were successfully applied and evaluated this year. Based on this learning each criteria has been further reviewed and adjusted by an expert group comprising leading experts/professionals and disability staff.
- Institutional admissions quotas for 2010 for students with disabilities and for students coming from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds have been drawn up and clearly stated by all participating HEIs. These will be made available on www.accesscollege.ie and on individual websites.
- The integration of the on-line HEAR & DARE application forms into the CAO website is in the final stages of development and testing, and will be available to applicants when the CAO 2010 cycle goes live on 3rd November.
- The Department of Education & Science has received preliminary advice from the Office of the Attorney General regarding any potential exposure to legal challenge on the grounds of positive discrimination. Full advice should be available in mid-autumn, so that DES can respond to the IUA in writing on this issue. Initial indications are, in the main, positive.
- Work has begun on the development of the most effective structures to underpin the two schemes as they move into the operational stage and also to ensure efficiency and sustainability. This will involve closer alignment of both HEAR and DARE operations and data management, under the responsibility of the IUA Access Managers group.

3. Funding

3.1. Recurrent Funding

3.1.1. Current Funding

The recurrent funding environment continues to be extremely challenging for universities. Indications suggest that this is unlikely to change over the coming years. The report of ‘*The Special Group on Public Service Numbers & Expenditure Programmes*’ has estimated that overall staff numbers, including non-academic staff, across the third level sector could be reduced by up to 10% over the medium term. We await with interest the 2010 estimates for public expenditure however all universities are anticipating a reduction in core grant funding in the region of 10% for 2010.

3.1.2 Tuition Fee Increase Submission 2009/10

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 2009/10 noting that the increase required to cover the cost of known unavoidable cost increases was in the region of 2.86%. Universities were subsequently advised by the Department of Education and Science that no increase may be applied to the undergraduate tuition fee for the academic year 2009/10.

3.2. Pension Issues

3.2.1 Proposed Transfer of University Pension Schemes

The legislation governing the transfer of university pension schemes to the National Pensions Reserve Fund (NPRF) was enacted in the Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 which passed through both houses of the Oireachtas in June of this year. The legislation protects and guarantees the entitlements of members and pensioners.

Secondary legislation by means of a ‘transfer order’ will be required to give effect to the transfer of the individual pension schemes and prior to the transfer order a statutory instrument will be required to give statutory effect to the individual schemes.

The NUIM and TCD schemes will be transferred in 2009 and the remaining three schemes will transfer in early 2010.

3.2.2 FRS 17 & University Financial Statements

The enactment of the pension legislation has provided a means for universities to resolve issues in relation to the application of FRS 17 in university consolidated financial statements. The C&AG has indicated that they will not issue a qualified audit report in respect of FRS 17 in the consolidated financial statements for all outstanding years.

3.2.3 University Model Pension Schemes

As reported previously a number of outstanding issues were identified which required clarification from the DES and/or Department of Finance and clarification has subsequently been received in respect of these issues. All universities are now in the process of submitting draft model schemes to the HEA for approval by the Authority.

3.3. Shared Services

The HEA facilitated by Deloitte’s held a Strategic Efficiency and Cost Reduction workshop on 17th June. Shared services were one of the key subject matters discussed at the workshop following on from the report produced by the IUA Shared Services Working Group.

At a subsequent meeting of IUA Council and the Strategy & Strategic Innovation Committee, it was agreed that the existing Working Group would be given the formal title

of “Steering Group” with responsibility for progressing the shared services agenda under the aegis of the SSI Committee, and with expanded senior-level membership. The new Steering Group had its first meeting on 9th October.

Representatives from the IUA have also met with representatives of the Transforming Public Services Working Group to share information in relation to work being undertaken in respect of shared services.

3.4. Sectoral Procurement Initiatives

Representatives of the IUA Shared Services Working Group attended a meeting of the University Procurement & Contract Officers Group (UPCOG) on 6th July to agree a plan for improved collaborative procurement across the sector.

The following actions have already been undertaken:-

A spend analysis review has been undertaken and the following high spend areas have been identified as short-term priorities:-

- Electricity
- PC’s
- Insurance
- Cleaning/facilities management
- Stationery

Collaborative tenders are currently being pursued in respect of electricity and PC’s and further analysis of the potential in the other areas is being examined by the group.

Regional procurement groups have already been set up (Shannon Consortium & a Dublin based procurement group incorporating those institutions in the DRHEA) and these groups are currently considering a range of further collaborative procurement initiatives on a regional basis.

UPCOG have also been tasked with the preparation of a report for IUA Council which will address the following:-

- Progress in respect of the priority areas identified above.
- Assessment of the potential of procurement card purchasing for delivering efficiencies and savings across the sector.
- Identifying current issues and barriers (e.g. behavioural issues, buying off contract) where senior management support is required to address these.
- Recommendations for improving efficiencies including standardization of requirements and catalogues across the sector, process developments and improvements through best practice sharing (e.g. consolidated invoicing, centralised procurement etc.)

The sector will also be considering the potential for efficiencies to be achieved through a central shared service procurement arrangement.

3.5. Taxation Issues

3.5.1 PAYE Issues

As reported previously the sector has continued to engage with the Revenue Commissioners in relation to PAYE issues. Despite a number of submissions, which have been led by UCC on behalf of the sector, Revenue have maintained their original position as set out in their letter of September 2006. A final response to Revenue outlining some further detail in respect of the issues and seeking further clarification in relation to the basis for the position adopted by Revenue has been issued and we are still awaiting a response to same.

3.5.2 Commission on Taxation

The report of the Commission on Taxation was published in September. None of the matters raised in the sector's submission (primarily relating to philanthropy and S50 arrangements) were supported by the commission. Some of the recommendations of the commission will also increase the cost base of universities.

3.6 Financial Reporting & Audit

The C&AG has proposed revisions to the arrangements for the audit of the accounts of the universities. It is proposed that the C&AG would only audit consolidated financial statements (and not HEA funding statements) and that only the consolidated accounts would be laid before the houses of the Oireachtas. Universities may choose to engage commercial auditors to audit the HEA funding statements (which will still be required by the HEA) and the reconciliation between the funding statements and the consolidated accounts.

Representatives from the sector met with representatives from the C&AG's Office and the HEA in relation to the proposal and some concerns were expressed in respect of elements of the proposal. The representatives from the C&AG's Office agreed to raise the concerns with the C&AG and revert back to universities in this regard.

4. Conference on "Governance in the University sector"

The Secretaries Group has agreed to organise a one day conference on governance, internal control and risk management. It is envisaged that invitations be extended, but not limited to, representatives from the IUA Plenary Group, Chairs of Governing Authorities, Deans, Head of Internal Audit Functions, Audit Committee members and Chairs of Finance. Topics have not yet been finalised but could include the role of governance in strategic planning & how good governance can improve the performance of an organisation. The conference will be confined to the university sector in the Republic of Ireland with invitations to be also issued to university counterparts in Northern Ireland. The date for the conference has not yet been finalised, however the third week in January 2010 has been proposed as most suitable.

5. Seminar on “Irish Copyright Law”

The Secretaries/Copyright Group has agreed to organise a one day seminar on “Irish Copyright Law”. Rob Corbet of Arthur Cox has been contacted in this regard. The seminar will give IUA members an overview of copyright law in Ireland and the licensing schemes that currently exist. Documentation produced during the course of the seminar will be made available for hosting on individual institutions websites. It is hoped that the seminar will be held before the end of November 2009.

6. Statements of Internal Control

The Secretaries Group continue to form Statements of Internal Control (SIC). As draft statements of internal control are developed, it was agreed by the Secretaries Group that these be circulated by each university. It is hoped that SIC’s can be finalised by the end of 2009.

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

An outstanding issue remains around the award formerly titled the Higher Diploma in Education, and currently designated the Postgraduate Diploma in Education, which remains outside of the NFQ.

The IUA and the NQAI have agreed that a working group, comprised of university and college of education representatives, together with a representative of the Teaching Council, should be convened to consider this issue in more detail and to make a proposal to the IUA Registrars’ Group regarding the appropriate NFQ level of this qualification. Prof. Tom Collins of NUIM has been asked to chair this group, the secretariat for which will be provided jointly by IUA and NQAI. Draft terms of reference for the group have also been proposed to IUA Registrars. The group is expected to make a proposal as to the appropriate placement/inclusion of this award in March 2010.

7.2. Framework Implementation and Impact Study Report

In September 2009 the NQAI published the Framework Implementation and Impact Study Report, prepared by an external study team of national and international experts. The team was chaired by Professor Tom Collins, Dean of Teaching and Learning and Professor of Education, NUIM.

Covering the first five years (2003-08) of NFQ operations, the purpose of the study was to:

- assess the extent to which the NFQ is being implemented

- support deeper implementation of the NFQ 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 NFQ.

The report contains 19 recommendations and is available at -
http://www.nqai.ie/framework_study.html

7.3. IUA / NQAI Framework Implementation Network

Following meetings of the joint IUA / NQAI Framework Implementation Network (FIN) on 6 April and 25 May 2009, chaired by Prof. John Scattergood of TCD, a practitioner-focused publication, based on the work of the three working groups in this network (the technical aspects of designing awards for inclusion in the Framework; developing discipline specific learning outcomes; and designing appropriate assessment methods), is in the final stages of preparation, for electronic publication in October 2009.

At their May 2009 meeting, FIN members were asked to indicate, in general, if they wished to continue with the network. Overall, members considered that there was merit in continuing the network over the next academic year, but that depending on the topics chosen for discussion, the members that have represented the universities and linked college may change. In the event that some turnover of members of the network arises, the IUA and NQAI will contact the university registrars and the presidents of the linked colleges to seek a nominee for participation in the network in the light of the topics chosen.

In order to establish areas of interest over the academic year 2009/2010, members have been asked to provide feedback regarding the work of the network so far and possible areas for future sector-wide activities, so that a proposal can be brought forward in time for the next meeting in November 2009.

7.4. Referencing of Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

Ireland completed the process of referencing the NFQ to the EQF in June 2009. NQAI convened a National Steering Committee to assist it in this process, including three international experts as well as representatives of FETAC, HETAC, IUA and the NCCA. The Steering Committee used the Referencing Criteria and Procedures agreed by the EQF Advisory Group, established to coordinate implementation of the EQF at European level. The Qualifications Authority participates in this advisory group.

Draft versions of the Referencing Report were discussed by the Qualifications Authority's Consultative Group and by wider stakeholders at a national EQF seminar held in April 09. A draft of the report was also published on the Qualifications Authority's website with an

invitation for comments. The final Referencing Report was adopted by the Qualifications Authority on 28 May 2009, subject to the agreement of the bodies responsible for quality assuring qualifications in the NFQ and is available at –

<http://www.nqai.ie/documents/EQFReferencingReportfinalJune2009.pdf>

This agreement was obtained in early June 2009. The second stage of EQF implementation, introducing a reference to the EQF in all new Certificate and Diploma Supplements, should be completed by 2012.

A seminar to mark the completion of the referencing process took place on 17 September 2009, and was opened jointly by Mr. Batt O’Keefe, T.D., Minister for Education and Science, and by Ms Odile Quintin, Director General for Education and Culture, European Commission. Ireland is the first country to complete this referencing process.

EQF is an overarching qualifications framework which links countries’ qualifications together, acting as a translation device to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in Europe. The core of the EQF consists of 8 qualifications levels which are described through learning outcomes (knowledge, skill and competence). The principal aims of EQF are to promote citizens’ mobility between countries and to facilitate their lifelong learning.

8. Internationalisation

8.1 Education Ireland

On 30 August 2009, DES issued a press statement announcing plans to establish a “quality mark” in order to promote the marketing of Irish education overseas. This announcement follows proposals made in 2004 regarding the creation of a new “Education Ireland” agency. The creation of a new agency is now no longer proposed; however the announcement stated that the criteria for the inclusion of full-time programmes for international students on the “internationalisation register” will be tightened, and that the maintenance of this register will be transferred from DES to NQAI. NQAI, and its successor agency, will also be given responsibility for the proposed “quality mark”, while Enterprise Ireland will take responsibility for marketing and promotion of the “Education Ireland” brand, and Failte Ireland for the promotion of the English language sector.

The press release can be found at -

<http://www.education.ie/home/home.jsp?maincat=10861&pcategory=10861&ecategory=10876§ionpage=12251&language=EN&link=link001&page=1&doc=46111>

8.2. Proposed New Immigration Regime for non-EEA Students

On 1 September 2009 the Minister for Justice, Equality & Law Reform published a set of proposals for the reform of non-EEA student immigration and initiated a public consultation process on the issue.

The discussion document drawn up by the DoJELR, in consultation with a number of other Government Departments, contains more than 20 specific proposals, including capping the length of time a person can spend in Ireland as a student, introducing a two tier system to facilitate the targeting of incentives towards the upper end of the academic spectrum, a tighter inspection regime, possible changes in respect of visas and new guidelines on work placement or internship. Some transitional measures are set out for those already in the system. Examination of the current provisions regarding access of students to the labour market is to be the subject of a separate review.

The full proposals can be found at –
<http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/PR09000181>

Following discussion at an IUA International Officers meeting, a draft IUA submission paper has been prepared and will be submitted prior to the deadline of 9 October 2009. In general, the IUA welcomes the proposals which will bring greater clarity and certainty to this topic, and assist with greater levels of internationalisation of Irish HE. The IUA submission also provides a number of detailed suggestions in various areas. The draft IUA position has been shared with a number of bodies such as IBEC and SFI.

9. Lifelong Learning, Upskilling

As reported in IUA Review June 09, the HEA has formed a small group to coordinate responses to increased demand for upskilling opportunities in higher education. The universities are represented on this group by F. von Pronzynski (DCU) and L. Purser (IUA). The university representation on this group has recently been expanded to include S. Jones (Academic Secretary UCC) and Anna Kelly (Director of Access and Lifelong Learning, UCD, also representing the Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance). The group met most recently on 28 September 2009.

The focus of the group so far has been on the development of a number of schemes, as follows:

- 1,000 part-time postgraduate places at NFQ Levels 8 – 9 for persons who are unemployed, with earmarked HEA funding.
- 1,500 part-time undergraduate places at NFQ Levels 6 – 8 for persons who are unemployed, a scheme financed by DETE.

Details of the places awarded, following a tendering process, for these schemes can be found at - <http://www.heai.ie/en/node/1285>. The universities all responded in a variety of

ways to these schemes, notably in terms of postgraduate places. The schemes were heavily oversubscribed in terms of places made available by universities and IoTs. It would appear that most places have been filled with students from the various target groups.

At the suggestion of IUA, the university coordinators of these initiatives and HEA met for an informal feedback session 18 September, at which details of the activities so far, from both university and HEA perspectives, were discussed. It was agreed that such discussions would usefully take place in the future as well, in order to ensure open and rapid feedback on issues arising.

The HEA group is also informed of other schemes under the broader “labour market activation” heading which are not directly linked to HE. These include:

- A scheme for redundant apprentices. This scheme, funded through FAS/DETE, has had an extremely low uptake by the target group, despite approx. 6000 redundancies in this category.
- A graduate work placement scheme, coordinated by FAS. Likewise, there have been very low levels of uptake in this scheme, possibly linked to poor communication of the scheme.

10. EUA

10.1 New EUA Report on Quality Assurance: need to allow space for risk-taking

One of the recommendations of a new EUA report published in September 2009 is that the Quality Assurance (QA) processes used in universities must allow more space for ‘risk taking and failure’ as this is essential for stimulating innovation and creativity in higher education.

The report “Improving quality, enhancing creativity: change processes in European higher education institutions” is based on a two-year EC-funded project, that EUA has carried out with partners ACQUIN (the Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute, Germany), the Higher Education Academy (UK) and the National University of Ireland, Maynooth.

The project (Quality Assurance for the Higher Education Change Agenda - QAHECA) brought together 29 higher education institutions and QA Agencies from 18 different countries to explore what kind of quality assurance processes in teaching and learning (external and internal) can actually support creativity and innovation. In the past, there have been concerns that QA processes can actually inhibit creativity within higher education.

The new report contains seven recommendations for universities and agencies:

- QA processes must allow space for risk taking and failure, whilst at the same time enabling institutions to identify and rectify a failure when it occurs
- To ensure that quality assurance is context sensitive (e.g. taking account of different disciplines, cultures and national contexts)
- QA should be inclusive – engaging the whole university community (academics and students) and should not just be the responsibility of a ‘QA unit’
- Effective quality assurance is based on a successful partnership between agencies and institutions, which should leave space for ‘trust and self-reflection’
- Sharing QA ‘experiences’ is essential, and the authors recommend the creation of platforms for dialogue both between departments, institutions and even at European level (These platforms should not, however, be based solely on copying good practices, but stimulating critical analysis.)
- QA processes must support institutions’ capacity to change and to reach strategic goals
- Agencies and institutions need to ensure engagement of all key actors in QA processes.

A full copy of the report can be downloaded at

http://www.eua.be/fileadmin/user_upload/files/Publications/QAHECA_Report.pdf

11. Communications / Events

11.1. Media Relations

11.1.1. Recent Press Releases and Coverage

Lisbon: University Presidents vote "Yes" to secure future of Higher Education - 25th Sept 09

- IUA Press Release
- Irish Times Coverage 25th July 09
- Irish Examiner Coverage 25th July 09
- Irish Independent Coverage 25th July 09

11.1.2. EU Commission Director General for Research launches euraxess.ie - 8th Sept 09

- IUA Press Release
- Silicon Republic– 8th Sept 09
- European Commission Website - 8th Sept 09
- Business World 8th Sept 09

11.2. Communications for SIF Projects

11.2.1. Launch of the Higher Education Access Scheme – 8th Sept 09

The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) was launched by the seven universities, DIT and the seven colleges of education on September 8th 2009. For IUA Comms this entailed the production of an information brochure, student flyer, display stands and internet site www.accesscollege.ie, as well as the press release and media campaign. An application guide will be produced in time for the CAO opening on 3rd November. The coverage outlined below was a steady start to a year long campaign.

Official Press Release

Third Level Access Scheme Extends to all Secondary Schools

Media Coverage:

Newspaper coverage of HEAR Launch 8th – 23rd September, 2009

- Irish Examiner – 8th Sept
- Evening Echo – 8th Sept
- Irish Independent – 9th Sept
- Evening Herald – 10th Sept
- Wicklow News – 15th Sept
- Connaught Telegraph – 15th Sept
- Kildare Times – 15th Sept
- Tallaght Echo – 16th Sept
- Ballyfermot Echo – 16th Sept
- Clondalkin Echo – 16th Sept
- Lucan Echo – 16th Sept
- Meath Post – 16th Sept
- Kildare Post – 16th Sept
- Irish Independent - 23rd Sept
- Sligo Champion – 23rd Sept
- IGC Guideline Magazine October issue
- Education Magazine October issue

Radio

- RTE News at One - 8th Sept.
http://www.rte.ie/radio1/podcast/podcast_newsatone.xml
- 2FM news
- INN (independent network news) to local radio stations.
- Cork's Life FM.

Wider Publicity:

The press release and brochure was **posted** to:

- 2200 guidance counsellors, principals, Senior IOT & University staff, Senior HEA & Dept of Education Officials, Government Ministers and Ministers of State

The press release and brochure was **emailed** to:

- 12 national and daily newspapers
- 9 Sunday newspapers
- 133 Regional newspapers and free sheets
- 30 College Publications & specialist education publications
- 71 Radio stations and programmes
- 350 members of the government – Ministers, Ministers of state, MEPs, Senators, TD's of the Dail, Members of the Oireachtas Committee On Education
- Pobal issued the release and brochure to their partnerships.
- Qualifax issued the release to their database of contacts and have the brochures available for download from the site.

11.2.2. Launch of the Disability Access Route to Education – 6th October 09

The *Disability Access Route to Education (DARE)*, aimed at all school leavers with disabilities, was launched by the seven universities, Athlone IT, DIT, National College of Ireland and the Mater Dei Institute of Education on 6th October 2009. For IUA comms this entailed the production of an information brochure, CAO forms, display stands and internet site www.accesscollege.ie as well as the press release and media campaign. An application guide will produced in time for the November 3rd CAO opening.

At the time of printing the IUA review the media coverage was not yet available.

Official Press Release - *Drive to fill over 1000 higher education places for students with disabilities*

11.3. Marketing the University Sector and IUA Services

IUA Newsletter July 09 Edition

The IUA online newsletter was distributed on July 29th

Items included:

- Universities Respond to labour market crisis
- Second Round Institutional Reviews begin 09/10
- New SIF Access Project Manager
- Name Change for Researcher Mobility Office
- EUA Report on collaborative Doctoral Education
- EUA Report on Masters Degrees in Europe
- NAIRTL Handbook on Writing Learning Outcomes
- Four events were promoted

11.4. Upcoming Events

The Evolving Landscape of Graduate Education - IUA 4th Level Ireland Conference, TCD, Nov 10/11, 2009.

The IUA communications office is involved in promoting this year's conference which will provide a forum to identify, promote, discuss and inform the evolving practices and policies of Irish graduate education. Prof. Jon Butler, Howard R. Lamar Professor of American Studies, History, and Religious Studies and Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Yale, will deliver the keynote address.

11.5. IUA Extranet

Council has agreed on the need for an IUA Extranet to disseminate information among IUA Groups. The site will be accessed with a username and password and will contain a record of group minutes, IUA sectoral documents, events calendar etc. Work on the development of the Extranet will begin in October and will take approximately 4-6 weeks to become fully functioning.