

Higher Education Authority**Report of the 386th Meeting held on 28th September 2017
in the Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dún Laoghaire.**

Present¹: Mr Bahram Bekhradnia (items 1-4, 7-11)
Mr Tony Donohoe
Dr Judith Eaton
Professor Orla Feely
Dr Sharon Feeney
Mr Michael Horgan, Chairman
Mr Michael Kerrigan
Ms Darina Kneafsey
Dr Sinéad O’Flanagan (via Skype, items 1-4, 7-11)
Dr Jim Mountjoy
Mr Pól Ó Móráin
Dr Lynn Ramsey
Dr John Wall

In attendance: Dr Graham Love (items 1-12)
Mr Padraic Mellett (items 1-12)
Dr Gemma Irvine (items 3.3-3.5 ,4-6, 8)
Mr Fergal Costello (items 3.3-3.5 ,4-6, 8)
Mr Andrew Brownlee (items 3.3-3.5, 4-6, 8)
Dr Richard Thorn (item 3.3-3.4)

The Chair at the start of the meeting conveyed the condolences of the Board to Michael Kerrigan following the sad death of his mother. He welcomed back Mr Bekhradnia and Dr Mountjoy following their reappointment to the Board.

Members thanked Dr Annie Doona for agreeing to host the meeting in IADT.

1. Report of 385th Meeting

1.1 The minutes were approved. In relation to paragraph 4.5 it was noted that the CEO will discuss with the Chair further the role of the Executive and the Board in the selection of reviewers.

2. Matters arising

2.1 No issues raised.

¹ The quorum for HEA Board meetings, six members, was met.

3. CEO's Report

3.1 The CEO updated on the following;

- Launch of the funding review – it was expected this would be launched by the Minister within the next few weeks.
- HEA response to the PAC report – the HEA has accepted all but two of the recommendations. The need to balance institutional autonomy and accountability was noted.
- Strategic dialogue meetings with the HEIs – 22 out of 24 held to date.
- Need to refine the Springboard programme having regard to the fall in unemployment.
- Impact of the GDPR on the HEA's ability to collect and share personal data.
- HEA administration budget position continues to be satisfactory.
- HEA staffing is a problem as there continues to be delays in securing approval from the Department to fill vacancies.

3.2 Members raised the following issues;

- The HEA's website needs to be carefully reviewed to eliminate errors.
- The reasons for the staff turnover. It was confirmed that exit interviews do take place. Members were advised that the bulk of the departures were due to the staff securing better paid positions. There may be a case that staff feel under undue pressure given the overall work programme. A staffing submission will shortly be sent to the DES. Members noted the need for the Executive to prioritise work in the meantime.
- The CEO advised that early indications were that the 2017 national pay shortfall might yet be recouped, there may be some modest capital funding and possibly some targeted skills funding.

3.3 The Chair welcomed Dr Richard Thorn noting that his report, once finalized, will equip UL to take the appropriate actions. Dr Thorn outlined the background and process to his report, noting it was not a statutory investigation but followed a request from the UL President to the DES. He acknowledged the co-operation of staff in the University and the assistance he received from Mr McDermott and Ms Walsh in the HEA Executive. The report was not yet complete, Dr Thorn was currently consulting parties impacted by the report.

3.4 Members raised a number of issues around the role of the HEA and the University. Members considered the next steps. Dr Thorn will brief the DES shortly. Members will be notified electronically before the report is released.

Decision: Members agreed on the need for an overall review of the governance of the Universities and the IoTs. This will include the role and responsibilities of institutional Presidents. Consideration should also be given to providing better guidance to the governing bodies of the HEIs.

4. Review of the Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning

4.1 The CEO introduced this item outlining discussions that have taken place with the Forum and the DES since the last meeting. He confirmed that the Forum's Director will shortly return to her previous employer.

4.2 Members noted the importance of clear expectations being set on the assumption that funding is to continue.

Decision: Members agreed to the publication of the independent review. It was agreed to provide the Forum up to €9m over four years with a review to be submitted to the Board by Q4 2020. It was agreed that the Executive would develop the hosting model and objectives for the Forum. The Board will be notified of these in due course.

5. Report of the System Development and Performance Management Committee

5.1 The Chair welcomed Mr O'Dowd and Mr Culhane from the CSO noting the Committee were of the opinion that the full Board would benefit from their presentation. Key points made by Mr. O'Dowd included;

- Growth in the employment of graduates after year 1 2014 vs 2010.
- Three years after graduation, graduates in education, business & law and ICT had reported the highest level of employment relevant to their qualification. By 2014 engineering graduates had shown significant improvement.
- Graduates of health and education disciplines had the highest earnings after year 1 in 2010, by year 2014 the highest year 1 earnings were enjoyed by ICT graduates.
- The report confirmed that male graduates earned more than female graduates.
- The median difference in earnings between graduates and those with just a leaving certificate grew between 2006 and 2015.

5.2 Members raised the following issues;

- Implications of the GDPR. Mr Culhane noted there was a derogation in the GDPR for statistical studies. The CSO also has in built protections, the data

analysts do not have access to personal data. The CEO noted that the challenge for the HEA was how it can continue to share its data with the CSO.

- Is it planned to include a narrative with the data? Members were advised that the proposal was to get the statistical report out in relatively raw form and use the data for subsequent reports such as the next System Performance report. Mr Costello noted the importance of ensuring the context of this data is fully understood when it is released.
- Potential for HEIs to undertake their own analysis.

5.4 Dr Mountjoy introduced the Committee's report. Having regard to the new HEA/CSO initiative the Committee noted the value of the HEA's own First Destinations report on more qualitative data such as student sentiment.

Decision: Members approved the Committee's report.

6. Report of Finance and Governance Committee

6.1 The Chair introduced the Committee's report noting there was one substantive recommendation concerning the funding of THEA. Mr Brownlee outlined the Executive's approach to working with those institutions facing financial difficulty. He noted that the 2017/18 intake for a number of the institutions in financial difficulty, GMIT, NCAD, ITT and WIT, was quite positive.

6.2 Members noted that the Universities appeared to be better resourced. It was noted they had access to other resources including university foundation revenue although the ability of universities to access this revenue depended on the rules of the foundation.

6.3 Mr Brownlee indicated that the Executive was working on a proposal for the Board to allow the HEA engage with the Chairs of the HEIs' governing bodies. It was agreed to consider this at the November Board meeting.

Decision: Members approved the report of the Finance Committee noting that the Executive will attach conditions to the funding to be provided to THEA.

7. Report of Audit Committee

7.1 Dr Feeney introduced the Committee's report. Members noted the Committee's review of its own development needs. It was agreed that Board members should avail of as much training as they deem necessary.

Decision: Members approved the Committee's report and the HEA's 2017 risk register.

8. Report of Policy and Planning Committee

8.1 Ms Kneafsey introduced the Committee's report. The Committee recommended changes to the draft Strategic Plan, the revised plan was included in the supporting documentation folder. The Chair reminded members that the documents in both folders should be read in advance of Board meetings. The CEO advised members that the Executive planned to use the current draft Strategic Plan as the driver for the 2018 work plan/budget. Arising from this exercise it may be necessary to make further modifications to the new Strategic Plan. Dr Irvine outlined a number of developments to the plan as presented to the Committee.

8.2 The following issues were raised;

- There should be a distinction in the language between those areas within the direct control of the HEA and those areas which are not. The language in the former should be more definitive.
- Consideration needs to be given to how the HEA could better use technology. The CEO noted the HEA already has a data and knowledge management strategy. This could be revisited when the new strategy is adopted.

Decision: It was agreed that the Executive should continue to progress the new strategy including the changes proposed by the Committee. The Board approved the Committee's report.

9. Report on Compliance with 2016 Code of Practice

Decision: Members noted the report from the DES on implantation of the 2009 Code of Practice.

Members noted the Executive's report on implementation of the 2016 Code of practice.

Members approved the Executive's implementation plan to address outstanding matters.

Members approved the Board's terms of reference subject to a number of amendments.

10. Membership of HEA Standing Committees

10.1 The Chair advised members that he has also established an additional committee consisting of himself, Dr Mountjoy and Dr O'Flanagan to review the performance of the CEO.

Decision: Members approved the membership as outlined in memorandum A 37/17 subject to the addition of Mr Bekhradnia to the System Development and Performance Management Committee.

11. Schedule of Board Meetings

Decision: The dates outlined in memorandum A 38/17 were approved.

12. HEA Board self-evaluation

12.1 This item was deferred to the next meeting.

13. Members only session

The following topics were discussed:

- Recognition by the Board that efforts are being made to improve documentation for meetings. Supplementary documentation may be an issue we need to review (volume rather than concept). Reference to the Executives' role in providing timely, accurate, informative, relevant and concise documentation
- The issues around the Teaching Forum were reviewed
- Audit committee and risk register discussed. Decision to allocate 'ownership' of risks emphasised as strong Board position.
- Organisation of Board meetings in Institutions raised. Agreed that no tours should be included in future meetings.
- General feeling that today's meeting was too long, the Chair accepted this and agreed to try to avoid any repetition.

14. Any other business

14.1 No matters raised.

Next Meeting

28th November, at Maynooth University

Padraic Mellett
9th November 2017