

**Higher Education Authority****Report of the 393<sup>rd</sup> Meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2018  
at University College, Dublin**

Present<sup>1</sup>: Dr Bahram Bekhradnia  
Ms Síona Cahill  
Mr Tony Donohoe  
Dr Orla Feely  
Dr Sharon Feeney  
Mr Michael Horgan  
Ms Darina Kneafsey  
Dr Deirdre Lillis  
Dr Ronan Lyons (via teleconference)  
Dr Jim Mountjoy  
Dr Sinéad O’Flanagan  
Mr Pól Ó Móráin  
Dr Lynn Ramsey  
Dr John Wall

Apologies: Dr Judith Eaton

In attendance: Dr Graham Love  
Mr Tim Conlon (items 1-3, 5-11)  
Dr Gemma Irvine (items 1-3, 5-11)  
Mr Padraic Mellett (items 1-3, 5-11)  
Ms Caitriona Ryan (items 1-3, 5-11)  
Dr Vivienne Patterson (items 1-3, 5-11)  
Ms Sheena Duffy (items 1-3, 5-11)  
Mr Peter Brown (items 1-3, 5-11)  
Ms Mary Farrelly (items 1-3, 5-11)  
Ms Valerie Harvey (item 9)

Members at the start of the meeting considered any potential conflict of interest.

The Chair thanked Dr Feely and her colleagues in UCD for agreeing to host the meeting. He welcomed Ms Farrelly to her first meeting following her appointment as Head of Finance and System Governance.

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<sup>1</sup> The quorum for HEA Board meetings, six members, was met.

## **1. Report of 392<sup>nd</sup> Meeting**

1.1 The minutes were approved subject to an amendment to paragraph 8.1 on the Board Governance Statement and a deletion from paragraph 14.4.

## **2. Matters arising**

2.1 No issues raised.

## **3. CEO's Report**

3.1 The CEO briefed Members on the forthcoming Irish American Higher Education Research Organisation (IAHERO) event in November and the joint HEA/MIT summit taking place in January 2019. Members were informed that the key purpose of such events was to develop the HEA's network of contacts, the papers which emerge from such events can feed into the HEA's own public policy initiatives. Costs are borne by the host organisation with the exception of participant travel costs (which are borne by each participant's own employer). Members were advised that the Irish participants have already made travel arrangements. It was agreed that Dr Irvine would attend in the absence of the CEO and Dr O'Flanagan would attend on behalf of the Chair. The Board will consider the HEA's participation at future such events after the November event.

3.2 Mr Mellett agreed to follow up on press cuttings, to include a HR dashboard in the CEO's report and to provide further details on planned research and consultancy expenditure between now and the end of this year.

3.3 The Chair acknowledged the work of the IT Unit on the improved AV system.

## **4. Members only session**

### **4.1 Resignation of Chief Executive Office**

The Chief Executive, Dr Graham Love outlined to the Board the reasons for his resignation. The Board and Dr Love entered a lengthy and detailed conversation on all aspects of his reasons for resigning. An Exit Interview had taken place, undertaken by SRI Executive and a copy of this will be circulated to the Board for discussion at the next meeting. It was agreed that Dr Love should receive a copy of the Exit Interview Report also.

## 4.2 Appointment of interim CEO

The Chair informed the Board of meetings and discussions with DES regarding the identification and appointment of an interim CEO. A name had been suggested, who was at CEO level within the public service and who was willing to take a short-term contract as interim CEO. Because the approval of DPER was required and because the individual did not want his identity revealed until his staff and Board had been informed, further information would not be available for a week or ten days.

The appointment would be made by electronic (email) circular approval.

## 4.3 Meeting with Senior Management Team

Arising from the resignation of the CEO, the Chair had met both the Senior Management Team and the general staff in an effort to give reassurance and support. A general 'Town Hall' meeting was held with the staff where questions were answered. At the SMT meeting, a number of issues were raised, these included: recognition of work undertaken by the SMT by the DES; the organizational restructuring in progress and its status; the recent recruitment process; arrangements for the strategic dialogue sessions and accommodation for staff within the current building, which was felt to be very serious. These matters would be further discussed at the next meeting.

## 4.4 IAHERO meeting

The Board discussed this matter at length.

## 5. Review of HEA Legislation

5.1 Members considered a discussion paper prepared by Dr Lillis and the Chair which combined a number of the recommendations outlined in the report prepared by BH Associates with other issues raised at previous Board meetings. Issues considered by Members included;

- The need for the powers of the HEA and the Minister/Department to be set out explicitly in legislation.
- The regulatory powers of the HEA should be proportional and incremental in nature
- The Irish Research Council should be established as a statutory body under the HEA.
- Options for a registration model for Higher Education Institutions including QQI's Register of Providers.
- HEA data requirements

- Size and process for appointment to HEI governing boards
- Size and membership of HEA Board, Members agreed on the desirability of continuing to have a student representative on the Board.
- Dr Mountjoy requested his opposition be noted in the minutes to (1) The Board having more than 12 Members, (2) including provision for Members employed by HEIs and, (3) including provision for a student representative on the Board.

**Decision:** It was agreed that the Executive would draft a submission and circulate to the Board. The Department of Education and Skills should be advised that the HEA submission will not be ready until 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

## 6. Report of Finance and Governance Committee

**Decision:** Members approved the Committee's report and recommendations, as follows:

- Process for HEA submission to the DES on the review of the HEA Act
- Proposed changes to the Fund for Students with Disabilities grant allocation model
- Principles to underpin a future system of penalties

## 7. Special Report of Comptroller and Auditor General

7.1 Dr Love advised Members that this report was likely to be submitted to the Public Accounts Committee within the next two months.

**Decision:** Members noted the report.

## 8. Report of Audit and Risk Committee

**Decision:** Members approved the Committee's report and recommendations noting that the Executive will be preparing a corporate risk register for consideration by the Committee at its next meeting.

## 9. Report of System Development and Performance Management Committee

9.1 Members discussed the following;

- System Performance Funding, it was agreed that the Executive would further refine the paper prepared following the Committee's last meeting for consideration at the Board's November meeting.

- The TU process – It was agreed that the Executive should, on behalf of the Board, forward the summary findings of the internal review of the recent TU process to the Department of Education and Skills. The Board also requested the Committee to consider the broader strategic positioning of the TU process.
- Strategic Dialogue Process – Non HEI members may be requested to attend strategic dialogue meetings if there is a delay with the appointment of an interim CEO.
- Landscape Funding Call – Members were advised that Minister had recently announced a further tranche of Landscape funding. However, a final sum remained unapproved. In that regard, the DES has requested meetings with those institutes who are not part of a TU consortia. Members noted that the HEA submitted its recommendations to the Department in June, having followed due process including meeting with institutes who are not part of TU consortia. It was agreed that the Executive should request the DES to outline the reasons for rejection of these recommendations.

**Decision:** Members agreed the Committee’s report and recommendations.

#### **10. Report of Research and Graduate Education Committee**

**Decision:** Members agreed the Committee’s report and recommendations.

#### **11. Report of Policy and Planning Committee**

11.1 Dr Irvine updated Members on initiatives arising from the report of the Gender Taskforce.

**Decision:** Members agreed the Committee’s report and recommendations.

#### **13. Any other business**

13.1 On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked Dr Love for his work over the past 18 months. They were sorry to see him leave but respected his decision.

#### **Next Meeting**

6<sup>th</sup> November, HEA Offices

Padraic Mellett  
1<sup>st</sup> October 2018