



Programme HEA Forward-Look Forum

Private Providers: What Role Should They Play in the Irish Higher Education Landscape?

8.30am–2pm, Wednesday 23rd November 2016

St. Laurence's Church, Grangegorman Campus, Dublin Institute of Technology

- 8.30am Registration and refreshments
- 9.00am Opening remarks: Michael Horgan, Chairman, Higher Education Authority
- 9.15am PART I: Changes in the higher education landscape: what is the role of private providers and what are the lessons for Ireland?

Around the world, private higher education (PHE) has grown in response to demographic pressures, on-going massification, the continuing transition to knowledge-intensive economies and services, changes to the labour-market and the expansion of lifelong learning. The range of providers is very heterogeneous. Some have existed for a century or more while new entrants are emerging and existing providers are changing focus and ownership. In Ireland the PHE sector has been a relatively small component of the higher education system but it is growing. What is the pattern around the world, and what differences are there between different world-regions and countries? To what extent is the PHE sector meeting a hitherto unmet educational need? What lessons can be learned from how the PHE sector has emerged elsewhere? What role do, and should, PHE play in the Irish higher education landscape?

Chairperson: Dr. Anne Looney, Interim Chief Executive, Higher Education Authority

Keynote speaker:

- Professor Pedro Nuno Teixeira, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs and Associate Professor of Economics, University of Porto; Director of the Center for Research on Higher Education Policies (CIPES); and Adviser to the President of Portugal on higher education

Panel:

- Neil Gallagher, College President, College of Computing Technology

- Professor Caroline Fennell, Senior Vice-President Academic and Registrar, University College Cork
- David O'Grady, Chief Executive, Marketing English in Ireland

11.00am Refreshments

11.20am PART II: The regulatory environment: how should this reflect the role of private higher education?

The expansion of PHE has often been controversial in many parts of the world. There has been an on-going debate, for example, in the U.S. about issues of regulation and quality. In Ireland, QQI has responsibility to make awards to learners in private providers, and overseas (English) Language (Education) schools through the ACELS (Accreditation and Coordination of English Language Services) process in addition to any college recruiting international visa-required students. Given the role that private higher education plays in the educational landscape, is it timely to consider a new regulatory framework? For example, should there be a system of initial licensing or registration of all new private providers, formal scrutiny of financial and governance arrangements, and requirements for transparency and disclosure similar to all public institutions? Should there be greater engagement with the PHE as part of the HE landscape? If so, what should private providers expect in return? What are the challenges and benefits of a new approach? Are there risks?

Chairperson: Fergal Costello, Head of System Development & Performance Management, Higher Education Authority

Keynote speakers:

- John Fielden, Director, CHEMS Consulting, London and co-author, *Private Providers in UK Higher Education: Some Policy Options* (HEPI, 2011)
- Dr. Pádraig Walsh, Chief Executive, Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Panel:

- Gina Quin, President, National College of Ireland
- Brid McElligott, Vice-President for Research and Development, Institute of Technology, Tralee
- Teresa Heeney, Chief Executive, Early Childhood Ireland

1.15pm Lunch