



Programme HEA Forward-Look Forum

Higher education futures: which issues and trends are most significant for Ireland and the HEA?

8.30am–2pm, Wednesday 31st May 2017

Gandon Suite North, Davenport Hotel, Merrion Street Lower, Dublin 2

The world is in a state of flux. While Ireland is changing, the world in which we are situated is also changing, and in very significant ways. How relevant are these mega-trends for Ireland? Are there other trends we should also take account of? Are some trends more likely or predictable than others? And, what are the implications of these trends for Irish higher education, and specifically for the work of the HEA? How should the HEA prepare for the challenges ahead? What strategic objectives should the HEA prioritise?

These questions form the basis for the 7th HEA Forward-Look Forum. The objective is to look ahead—at some key trends likely to shape immediate and future policy-challenges and choices for Ireland, as well as to set the overall context for the HEA as it considers the *HEA Strategic Plan 2017–2021*.

The 7th HEA Forward-Look Forum comprises three plenary sessions. To encourage as much participation and open discussion and debate as possible, each session is scheduled for just over one hour. The three keynote speakers will each seek to test our assumptions and encourage us to think outside-of-the-box. A further input to the day's deliberations will be a short *vox pop* film featuring students from around Ireland talking about their views on the future of Ireland and Irish higher education over the next 20 years.

Programme

8.30am Registration and refreshments

9.00am Opening remarks: Dr. Graham Love, Chief Executive, Higher Education Authority

9.15am **PART I: What mega-trends are shaping society into the future?**

It is hard to predict the future, although almost everyone identifies globalisation, demographic and societal change, the transformative effect of technology, and continuing demand for education, research and innovation as amongst some of the significant factors. How significant are these mega-trends likely to be around the world, and for Europe? What is their likely influence and impact on how we will live and work into the future? How significant are these factors likely to be for higher education? What are the risks and opportunities?

Chairperson: Dr. Gemma Irvine, Head of Policy and Strategic Planning, Higher Education Authority

Keynote speaker: Dirk van Damme, Head of the Innovation and Measuring Progress Division (IMEP), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

10.30am Refreshments

10.50am **PART II: Growing demand, widening participation and the skills agenda**

Education will play a significant role providing the skills and competencies needed to operate in this new world but also producing the new knowledge to fuel social and economic change whilst provoking deeper inquiry, understanding and analysis. Education has the potential to be a powerful tool helping to raise opportunity and aspiration. However, accommodating more students will require different types of educational providers and programmes, and this is before we factor in people living and working longer, and needing and wanting to retrain and refresh their skills and knowledge. Who is the future student? What are his/her demands? To what extent can higher education help bridge persistent gaps in social inequality and improve participation levels amongst under-served communities? How can higher education help meet changing labour-market and skills needs while also preparing students for jobs that we don't yet know about?

Chairperson: Caitríona Ryan, Head of Access Policy, Higher Education Authority

Keynote speaker: Professor Claire Callender, Professor of Higher Education Policy, UCL Institute of Education, University College London and Birkbeck, University of London

12pm **The student-perspective: vox pop video**

12.10pm **PART III: What are the implications for Ireland and how should the HEA prepare for the challenges ahead?**

Over the last decades, Ireland has been utterly transformed—but so also has the world around us. Over the past year, the U.K. voted to leave the European Union and the U.S.A. has entered a new era of populist nationalism, along with other countries. At the same time global competition is accelerating. As other countries invest considerable resources in education and research, there are challenges for Ireland—and for universities and institutes of technology especially—in terms of the changing balance between public and private funding.

Irish higher education has shown remarkable resilience in meeting the challenges of the ‘Great Recession’, but the challenges of the future will be of a different magnitude. The ‘value-added’ in the foreseeable future will result from delivering high-quality education to students from a broader array of social and economic circumstances, at all stages of life; undertaking new discoveries, solving societal challenges and innovating more ideas; and playing an effective and responsive role in a more complex and competitive global economy. How well positioned are Irish higher education institutions to meet these challenges? What are the risks and the opportunities? What strategic objectives should the HEA prioritise?

Chairperson: Dr. Graham Love, Chief Executive, Higher Education Authority

Keynote speaker: Dr. Stephen Kinsella, Senior Lecturer in Economics, Kemmy Business School, University of Limerick

1.25pm Lunch