

Service Level Agreement
Department of Education and Skills
&
Higher Education Authority

Prepared By:	Higher Education Division
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1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE AGREEMENT

This Agreement sets out the management and accountability framework between the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the Higher Education Authority (HEA). The purpose of the Agreement is to:

1. Set out the respective roles and responsibilities of both organisations in relation to the development and oversight of the higher education system in Ireland
2. Provide clarity on the strategic and operational aspects of the organisations' relationship
3. Provide a basis, framework and schedule for the delivery of high quality services and outcomes for the HEA sector in 2017
4. Establish structured arrangements for communications, reporting and liaison
5. Facilitate effective engagement and co-operation between both organisations.

This Agreement supersedes the Service Level Agreement for 2016

This Agreement is not a legally binding agreement or a contract and is not exhaustive in its identification of responsibilities. It does not in any way limit any additional actions or engagement between the two organisations. It also does not supersede any specific agreements between the two organisations in relation to particular work areas.

Both organisations will ensure that all relevant staff are familiar with the Agreement and its implications and that all dealings between the two organisations are conducted in accordance with its principles and provisions.

The services to be delivered as part of this Agreement will be finalised each year before the end of the preceding year, to the greatest extent possible, to allow for alignment with the respective organisational work plans.

1.2 DURATION OF THE AGREEMENT

This agreement is valid from 1st January 2017 to 31st December 2017. The agreement will be renewed on an annual basis.

The Agreement may be amended or modified as required provided mutual agreement is obtained from both signatories.

1.3 FLEXIBILITY AND AMENDMENT OF TARGETS

Both parties recognise that it may become necessary to change, depart from agreed performance targets during the term of this agreement. A necessity for amendments may be prompted by changes in e.g. legislation, government/ministerial priorities or policies, prevailing operating circumstances and/or broader political, economic, financial or related priorities. They may also rise because of unforeseen personnel changes in the HEA, or changes to the directions of projects resulting in extended timelines.

Where amendments become necessary, the Department will engage in meaningful and timely consultations with the HEA. In the course of all consultations, the Department will be cognisant of the resources required by the HEA to deliver additional priorities or the need to deprioritise some objectives if additional delivery requirements emerge. The Department also acknowledges that there may be co-dependencies in some instances where the delivery of objectives also require the commitment of other stakeholder agencies. At all times, the HEA is committed to working with all stakeholders in delivering the Government’s objectives for the higher education system and the Action Plan for Education.

1.4 REPORTING AND LIAISON STRUCTURES

In addition to regular meetings and ongoing dialogue between management in the relevant areas of responsibility in the two organisations, the following meetings have been agreed to review progress on the services outlined in this Agreement. The final meeting is for the purpose of reviewing the performance of the system against the national priorities and system objectives outlined in the System Performance Framework¹ and agreeing priorities for the next period.

Type of Meeting	Level of Attendance	Date
SLA review	Senior Mgt DES/HEA	End Q1 2017
Mid-year SLA review	CEO/Senior Mgt DES/HEA	End August 2017
2016 SLA Progress and Draft SLA 2017	CEO/Senior Mgt DES/HEA	End Oct 2017

¹Higher Education System Performance Framework 2014-16 <http://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Higher-Education/HEA-Higher-Education-System-performance-Framework-2014-2016.pdf>

2. RESPECTIVE ROLES AND FUNCTIONS

Higher education is central to individual, societal and economic development and is a vital component for overall national development. The Department and the HEA have a common mission of supporting the development and delivery of higher education. The respective roles are set out below.

2.1 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

The mission of the Department of Education and Skills is to provide for high-quality education, which will:

- To facilitate individuals through learning, to achieve their full potential and contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development.

Its key functions in relation to higher education are:

- To support Government in determining national policy across all dimensions of higher education activity including skills, access, research, innovation and internationalisation;
- Development of a new System Performance Framework outlining the national priorities, the key system objectives and the performance indicators against which the performance of the system as a whole will be assessed for the period to 2021;
- To support Government in determining the level of public funding for the sector, and to be accountable to the Oireachtas for its expenditure;
- To develop the legislative framework to ensure that national policies relevant to higher education can be implemented;
- To hold the HEA accountable for the performance of its functions.

2.2 HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY

The HEA is the statutory funding authority for the universities, institutes of technology and a number of other designated institutions and is an advisory body to the Minister for Education and Skills in relation to the higher education sector. The HEA was established with the enactment of the Higher Education Authority Act 1971. The functions of the HEA as defined in that, and subsequent Acts, include:

- Furthering the development of higher education;
- Assisting in the co-ordination of State investment in higher education and preparing proposals for such investment;
- Promoting an appreciation of the value of higher education and research;
- Promoting the attainment of equality of opportunity in higher education;
- Promoting the democratisation of the structure of higher education;
- Conducting reviews of the strategic plans and equality policies in higher education institutions and to publish reports of such reviews;
- Promoting attainment and maintenance of excellence in learning, teaching and research in higher education;

- Allocating the moneys provided by the Oireachtas to publicly funded institutions;
- Ensuring proper oversight of the governance of the higher education sector;
- Regulatory overview of the higher education system.

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 sets out the strategic role of the HEA in the further development of the higher education system; specifically the monitoring of the performance of higher education institutions and providing accountability to the Minister in respect of performance outcomes for the sector. This is enacted through the System Performance Framework and the process of strategic dialogue.

The HEA also has a key role in developing funding mechanisms and deploying funding to drive performance in the system. The HEA will hold the institutions accountable for this funding.

In support of the wide range of activities in which it is involved, and to assist government and other agencies, the HEA collects, analyses, and reports on data from and across institutions on an ongoing basis. In addition, the HEA also engages in international benchmarking of its work and of the higher education sector to ensure that the development of the system is informed by international best and future practice.

The HEA plays a key role in providing policy advice to the Minister and the Department on the current performance and direction of the higher education system and in the development of future higher education policy. In support of this role, the HEA may conduct or commission research and raise policy issues with the Department.

The HEA will ensure that the Department is kept fully informed or involved on all initiatives/developments under consideration in this context. This should include where appropriate the participation of the Department in any working groups or processes established to progress work in a particular area.

2.3 MUTUAL COMMITMENTS

Both parties are committed to the promotion of partnership, responsiveness and mutual co-operation in their ongoing interactions.

Both parties undertake to ensure that no unnecessary delays will arise in respect of decision making, responses to correspondence, information request, feedback on draft reports or other document, or related matters. In relation to parliamentary questions or other parliamentary business, the HEA will provide appropriate material within the specified timeline. The Head of Corporate Affairs in the HEA will be the point of contact for all such requests, and the CEO will sign off on the response.

Both parties commit to keep each other fully apprised and updated on any emerging issues, planned initiatives or scheduled public announcements.

The HEA will ensure that there is consultation with the Department on draft reports as they are finalized, and that the Department is provided with a final draft before publication.

In relation to interactions with the higher education institutions, the primary conduit for communication between the Department and the HEIs will be the HEA who will keep the Department fully informed of such communications. This does not preclude direct communication between the Department and the HEI's and vice versa on occasions when necessary.

3. CORE ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

The core activities and key services to be provided by the HEA to the Department in 2017 are set out in this section in addition to the service commitments relating to each service along with associated indicators and delivery targets. This SLA reflects the 2017 work plan approved by the Board of the HEA.

No.	Service	Covered by HEA Work Plan 2017 Objective:
1.	Implement the system performance framework	2.1,2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 2.6, 3.3,
2.	Support the improvement of system-wide quality in teaching and learning	2.10, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13, 2.15, 2.16
3.	Support the development of research and innovation capacity across the sector	2.17, 2.18, 2.19, 2.20, 2.21, 2.22, 2.23
4.	Improve the responsiveness of the HE sector to workforce skills needs and its engagement with enterprise	2.9, 4.6, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8
5.	Promote equity of access to, and the transformation of pathways to and within higher education	5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10
6.	Support the internationalisation of the higher education system and to ensure that the institutions adopt a holistic approach to internationalisation as a strategy for quality enhancement	2.24, 2.25, 2.26
7.	Implement the agreed system reconfiguration and review higher education provision	2.4, 2.7, 2.8, 2.14,
8.	Manage the allocation of public funding to higher education institutions and to support system financial sustainability and implementation of public sector reform	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4,1.5, 1.6, 1.7,
9.	Promote, monitor and ensure best practice with regards governance and accountability requirements for HEA and for the sector	1.8, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10,
10.	Support the Department in responding to the political system, departmental reporting and analysis requirements and policy development	4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7, 4.8

HEA Workplan 2017

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Key:

AB	Andrew Brownlee
FC	Fergal Costello
GI	Gemma Irvine
PB	Peter Brown
PM	Padraic Mellett
VP	Vivienne Patterson
CR	Caitríona Ryan
SMT	Senior Management Team
CEO	Chief Executive

Board meetings 2017

January 24th
March 28 th
May 16 th
June 27th
September 28th
November 28th

(1) Funding and Sustainability

The outcome under this strategic objective is a higher education system that is funded sustainably on the basis of performance against national outcomes. The HEA has repeatedly advised the Minister for Education and Skills of the need for a sustainable funding strategy, and the associated risk. The Expert Group chaired by Peter Cassells reported in 2016 and emphasised the same issue. The key objectives planned for 2017 and the key performance indicators representing achievement and success in each objective are:

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
1.1 To manage and support the review of the allocation model for HEI funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review completed within the agreed terms of reference and timeframe - New funding model developed responsive to local and national social and economic needs and aligned with system goals - Implementation plan agreed for funding allocation process for 2018 and future years 	Q3	AB
1.2 To allocate the grant for 2017, agree budgets with each institution and review and monitor ongoing HEI financial stability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grants allocated and budgets agreed with all funded HEIs - Regular reporting on financial position of individual HEIs 	Q2	AB

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
1.3 To agree and monitor three year financial plans with HEIs classified as financially vulnerable to ensure progress towards a balanced budget.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreed plans in place with all vulnerable HEIs, and monitoring and reporting structures in place 	Recurrent	AB
1.4 To report on the financial health of the higher education sector following the budget process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report completed and presented to the Finance and Governance Committee 	Q3	AB
1.5 To implement a new management information framework for universities, colleges and IoTs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New framework implemented as part of the budget process to ensure more timely and robust information to facilitate HEA and institutional decision-making 	Q3	AB
1.6 To make a submission to the Capital Review process for needs of HE sector and needs of the Irish Research Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capital prioritisation exercise completed - Preparation of case for HE based on ongoing survey/consultation - Compelling and comprehensive case submitted on behalf of HEA and IRC, resulting in significant allocations for the sector 	Q1	AB & PB

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
1.7 To manage capital, PRTL and access funding programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- PRTL Cycle 5 programme successfully completed and all monies allocated- Funding allocated efficiently in a transparent manner delivering on system strategic goals	Q2 Ongoing	AB AB

(2) System Development

The outcome under this strategic objective is a coherent system of higher education that is optimally structured and governed and that delivers improved performance to achieve the national objectives as set out by Government. The key objectives and KPIs towards achievement of this outcome in 2017 are:

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
2.1 To prepare the System Report arising from Strategic Dialogue Cycle 3	- The final report, including the evaluation of all the HEIs is approved by the HEA for submission to the Minister	Q2	FC
2.2 To manage final round of strategic dialogue discussions with HEIs	- Final round completed with high level of institutional engagement and support for the process - Report on evaluations of HEIs	Q4	FC
2.3 To prepare system report arising from the final evaluation of first set of strategic dialogue compacts	- Preparation of report for HEA approval - Work with DES to prepare a case study report for the period 2014-2016 to complement the final System Performance Report for that period	Q4	FC
2.4 Review the implementation of the recommendations of the International Review Panel on Initial Teacher Education Provision	- HEA and DES to commence this review in 2017	Q2	FC

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
2.5 To continue process of landscape reform FC	- Agree process with DES for the allocation of €4 million ring-fenced funding for TUS and funding allocated	Q1	FC
	- Progress of merging institutions and regional clusters monitored	Q2	
2.6 Commence implementation of new System Performance Framework for 2017 – 2021	- Work with DES to commence an economic, social and cultural impact assessment for HE	Q2	FC
2.7 To prepare basis for next set of HEI compacts	- Revised guidance material available for HEIs based on the new HE performance framework	Q4	FC
2.8 To agree new compacts with HEIs for next cycle	- New compacts agreed with all HEIs informed by new framework and reflecting strategic and regional priorities	Q4	FC
2.9 To progress HEA thematic reviews	- Complete background review of engineering - Decision on scale and focus of review	Q2	FC

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
2.10 To consider any further TU applications (Stage 2 or Stage 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommendations for HEA board as per process 	As required – dependent on TU legislation. Report to Board July to update	FC
2.11 To manage the National Programme for the Inclusion Coordinators for Early Years Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First successful graduate cohort and continued enrolments - Graduate employability tracked through the Graduate Outcomes survey in 2018 	Q4 Q4	VP
2.12 To implement agreed actions under three-year HEA–QQI MOU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved alignment of QQI’s institutional dialogue with the HEA’s strategic dialogue - Joint programme of 2017 activity developed to progress Ireland’s International Education Strategy - Full SMT of HEA/ QQI meeting held - CEO of each organisation will meet with the Board of the other 	Recurrent Recurrent Q2 Q3	FC GI GI CEO
2.13 To continue funding and oversight of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Independent review of the National Forum completed and recommendations made - Implement recommendations of the review of the National Forum - A DES/HEA seminar on Forum-funded research projects demonstrates impact of the project 	Q2 Q2 onwards Q3	GI

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of the implementation of the Roadmap for Enhancement in a Digital World 2015-2017 completed - Digital Skills Framework for Irish Higher Education finished 	Q4	
2.14 To roll out year 5 of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and develop a Postgraduate Research Engagement Survey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ISSE conducted and national report published - New Postgraduate Research Engagement Survey developed for 2018 pilot. 	Q1- Q2 Survey Live Q2 – Q3 Data Analysis Q4 – Report Launch and Publication	VP
2.15 To assist the Department of Education and Skills in the delivery of key objectives in the roll out of the National Student Engagement Project in partnership with the QQI and USI.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">) Review of the NStEP Pilot Training Completed) Student and Staff participant from each HEI attended SPARQS Conference) Second group of HEIs selected to participate in the NStEPS class reps training and training completed) Student Trainers Call 2017 completed) Digital Badge for Student Engagement developed) National work streams identified) National event held for Student Officers) Establishment of a National Student Engagement Network 	Q1 Q1(March 23 rd) Q2 Q1 Q1/2 Q2 Q3 Q4	VP

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
2.16 To progress transition agenda through driving broader undergraduate programmes and supporting research and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation in Transitions Reform Steering Group meetings ensures alignment between undergraduate development and transition priorities. 	Recurrent	GI
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summary paper written on HEI progress on transition agenda as outlined in the performance compacts 	Q1	FC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participate in the new Transition Reform Research sub-Group - A research and evaluation programme agreed with transition steering group and stakeholders - Increased number of HEIs with broad undergraduate entry programmes and a reduction in the number of entry routes into higher education 	Recurrent	GI/VP

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
2.17 To support the work of the DES Higher Education Research Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Papers prepared and submitted to HERG for discussion - Ongoing support for HERG Work Programme including scoping of research impact approaches and preparation of input to preparations for FP9 (to be agreed with DES) 	Recurrent	GI
2.18 To implement actions which the HEA is the designated lead under Innovation 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participated in Innovation 2020 (I2020), H2020, SRPG and HLG meetings resulting in advancement of DES, HEA and IRC deliverables under Innovation 2020, and HEA/IRC contributing to broader progress in implementation of national policy. - Active engagement in the development of the next PRTL I leads to key roles of the IRC and HEA - Large items of Research Equipment (LIRE) database upgraded - Participated in National Open Access group meetings contributing to broader progress in implementation of I2020 objectives and development of national policy which will benefit the sector. - Agreed a standardised categorisation scheme to record public investment in research - Developed system-wide tracking of research mobility into industry – Graduate Outcomes Survey/CSO data 	Recurrent Q1 Q2 Recurrent Recurrent Recurrent	GI and PB GI, PB & AB AB GI and PB GI and PB VP/FC

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
2.19 To implement the National Framework for Doctoral Education	- Advisory Group for implementation of the National Framework for Doctoral Education established	Q1	GI
2.20 To become the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) National Delegate	- ESFRI National Delegate role successfully transferred from IRC to HEA	Q1	GI
2.21 To develop a strategy to attract researchers to Ireland in the context of Brexit	- Work with DES to develop a strategy to attract researchers to Ireland in the context of Brexit	Q1	IRC/HEA
2.22 Manage and develop, through the IRC, research funding programmes focused on people and skills development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship Scheme (2017) Awards - Employment Based Postgraduate Programme (2017) Awards - Enterprise Partnership Scheme 2017 (Postgraduate Scholarships) – launch - Enterprise Partnership Scheme 2017 (Postgraduate Scholarships) Awards 	Q1 Q2 Q1 Q3	IRC

- Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellowship Scheme (2017) Awards	Q2	
- Enterprise Partnership Scheme 2017 (Postdoctoral Fellowships) Awards	Q3	
- CAROLINE MSCA-cofunded Research Fellowships CALL 1 Awards	Q2	
- CAROLINE MSCA-cofunded Research Fellowships CALL 2 Launch	Q3	
- Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship Scheme (2018) launch	Q3	
- Employment Based Postgraduate Programme (2018) launch	Q4	
- Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellowship Scheme (2018) launch	Q4	
- Frontier Research Programme launch	Q1	
- Frontier Research Programme awards	Q4/Q1 '18	
- Basic Research Excellence Award	Rolling	
- Research for Policy and Society Programme 2017 – launch (contingent on partner funding)	Q3	
- Research for Policy and Society Programme 2017	Q4	

<p>2.23 To agree a memorandum of understanding with Science Foundation Ireland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Memorandum signed; strong alignment and co-operation between HEA and SFI delivers stronger strategic focus for both organisations. - Plan in place for greater convergence in application, review and award system, aligned with new graduate database. 	Q2	CEO
<p>2.24 To progress the International Education Strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revised model for implementation of the Government of Ireland International Education Scholarship Programme agreed - Internationalisation metrics included in the system performance dialogue process - Engaging with HEIs on their internationalisation plans and on their implementation to ensure delivery on the strategic actions of the International Education Strategy. - Increased awareness of the broad range of benefits of Internationalisation for HEIs - Closer synergy with the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning on Internationalisation initiatives 	<p>Recurrent</p> <p>Q2</p> <p>Recurrent</p> <p>Q4</p> <p>Recurrent</p>	GI

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
2.25 To increase student and staff mobility through our role as national agency for the higher education components of the Erasmus+ (E+) programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact review of Erasmus+ completed and used as input for DES review - Participate in and assist with the mid-term evaluation of Erasmus + Programme. - Completed impact reviews of selected LLP/E+ System Checks/Audits/Monitoring completed - Active participation in key ERASMUS working groups ensure high levels of engagement with programme and high profile for Irish NA - Participation in EHEA (Bologna Follow Up Group, BFUG) groups including the Advisory Group 1 'International Cooperation' and the 'Working Group on New Goals' to ensure HEA work is informed by relevant developments. 	<p>Q2</p> <p>Q4</p> <p>Q4 Recurrent</p> <p>Recurrent</p>	<p>GI</p>
2.26 To engage in BREXIT discussion and activities providing the HE view	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation in relevant meetings, conferences, and seminars on BREXIT ensures the strategic development of the HE system in Ireland and the maintenance of a shared academic space with UK HEIs. - Preparation of documentation and advice as needed by <i>Inter-Departmental Group on EU-UK Relations – Education subgroup of the Working Group on the Economy</i> 	<p>Recurrent</p> <p>Recurrent</p>	<p>GI</p>

(3) Governance and Accountability in Higher Education

The outcome under this strategic objective is an appropriate governance/regulatory relationship between HEIs and the HEA that reflects our new mandate and respects institutional autonomy. The key objectives and KPIs towards achievement of this outcome in 2017 are:

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
3.1 To continue the implementation of the Governance Framework for Higher Education and ensure effective communication of this framework and associated requirements to all relevant stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Governance Framework accepted by all HEIs - Governance reporting deadlines to DES met 	Recurrent	AB
3.2 To gather, analyse and report on the Annual Governance Statements from HEIs for 2015/16 and review HEI certified accounts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comprehensive report on the Annual Governance Statements compiled and provided to the DES - Appropriate actions agreed with HEIs on all issues identified in audited accounts and governance statements 	Q4	AB

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
3.3 To engage with HEI chairs/Governing Bodies on outcomes of strategic dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engagement with Chairs to ensure that governing bodies are informed on the outcomes of the strategic dialogue process 	Q2	FC
3.4 To ensure a signed financial memorandum is received from each HEI outlining respective responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Signed financial memoranda received from all HEIs giving assurances of undertakings and responsibilities 	Q2	AB
3.5 To monitor the implementation of ECF/Delegated Sanction Agreement and Departures Framework across the HE sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delegated sanction agreement established with sector, allowing for controlled and strategic recruitment to improve efficiency and performance - Staffing monitored and reported on a quarterly basis with timely follow up of breaches of sanction 	Recurrent	AB
3.6 To commission the second governance rolling review on an appropriate aspect of governance compliance and implement appropriate actions in response to the findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree the focus of the review with DES - Review completed and action plan agreed in response to findings 	Q4	AB

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
3.7 To review and monitor the HEA's protected disclosure policy with regard to disclosures made by HEI employees and manage the process for addressing any such disclosures that arise.	- Protected Disclosure procedures for HEA CEO role as prescribed person reviewed and updated to ensure greater clarity on approach to and treatment of disclosures from HEI staff	Q1	AB
	- Annual report prepared on protected disclosures arising and resultant HEA response	Q4	
3.8 To develop guidelines for Governing Body members in HEIs on HEA expectations on the role of Governing Bodies and their membership.	- Following engagement with chairpersons guidelines completed and disseminated to all HEIs giving greater confidence that members of governing bodies are aware of their responsibilities and role	Q4	AB
3.9 To liaise with the Comptroller and Auditor General to share knowledge regarding governance and accountability issues and facilitate early intervention.	- Quarterly meetings held with the C&AG.	Recurrent	AB

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
3.10 To implement the recommendations of the Report of the Expert Group: HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The 12 recommendations outlined for the HEA in the report are progressed - HEA is recognised as leading implementation of the review and has organised meetings with stakeholders - Ireland is recognised internationally as leading on this agenda 	Recurrent	GI, AB, & FC
3.11 Conduct review of the implementation of IP Policies in HEIs including policies on research royalty payments in consultation with KTI and others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review complete and recommendations being implemented 	Q4	AB & GI
3.12 Oversee an external review of HR & Financial Practices at University Limerick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree approach and Terms of reference with DES - Procure or appoint reviewer - Provide support as required 	Q3	AB
3.13 Oversee an external review of IP & spin out companies (FeedHenry) at Waterford IT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree approach and Terms of reference with DES - Procure or appoint reviewer - Provide support as required 	Q4	AB
3.14 Manage/Chair the working group for GMIT / Castlebar Campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement agreed terms of reference with the working group - Provide support as required 	Q2-Q3	AB
3.15 Co-ordinate review of Free Fees scheme with DES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree approach and Terms of reference with DES - Procure or appoint reviewer - Provide support as required 	Q4/Q1 2018	AB

3.16 Consult with DES and participate in the Working group for IOT Presidential Appointments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree approach and Terms of reference with DES - DES to co-ordinate nominations form stakeholders - Attend meetings - Provide support as required 	Commence Q4	AB
3.17 Review & report on Whistleblower/Protected Disclosures in HEI Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consult with HEI's & DES - Report on disclosures and findings in relation to numbers, type of disclosures and procedures followed. 	Q3	AB

(4) Strategic Planning

The outcome under this strategic objective is that the HEA is effective in anticipating trends in higher education development nationally and internationally and also enhances the data/evidence base that supports our policy advice to the Minister for Education and Skills. The key objectives and KPIs towards achievement of this outcome in 2017 are:

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
4.1 To continue implementation of the Data and Knowledge Management Strategy	- Completion of an interactive Statistics Section on the new HEA website	Q3	VP
	- Publication of a full study of completion rates and enhancement of our evidence base for policy development	Q3	
4.2 To collect student data on an annual basis and report such data in a comprehensive set of statistical publications.	- Key Facts and Figures published, focusing on key strategic themes	Q4	VP
	- Publication of the First Destination of Graduates Survey 2016	Q4	
	- Results for 2016 graduates and Non Progression Analysis published	Q1	
4.3 To implement the Graduate Outcomes Survey	- Development of a database and web interface for data collection completed	Q1-Q3	VP/FC
	- New graduate outcomes survey piloted	Q1-3	

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
4.4 To implement the staff database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scoping exercise on data extraction options for the new staff database is completed - Steering and Sub Groups are put in place to develop database content and development in place - Pilot phase of implementation underway 	Q4	VP
4.5 To continue development of key institutional statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The metrics for the Institutional Profiles for inclusion in the System Performance Framework are further developed, with particular focus on strategic priorities 	Recurrent	FC/VP
4.6 To perform a review of national and international impact assessment models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact assessment models relevant to teaching and learning, research and engagement are reviewed - Recommendations about metrics and impact assessment models relevant to measurement of system performance are made to the Department of Education and Skills to assess the impact of higher education on enterprise and society 	Q4	VP/GI
4.7 To maintain ongoing review of trends in higher education to support medium to long term policy development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation and/or organising of seminars, conferences and international to inform all HEA work and debate about the future direction of the HE sector - Forward Look Forum held and future direction and format of these events a considered as part of strategic planning process 	Recurrent Q2 & Q4	GI
4.8 To monitor and report on progress in the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quarterly reporting of the progress in respect of student accommodation developments; 	Recurrent	AB/SR

development of student accommodation both on and off campus and to provide input into the development of a national strategy for Student Accommodation

- Participation in the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Student Accommodation and in meetings with relevant stakeholder organisations including HEIs and HFA;
- Provision of information, advice and statistical data to the DES for the development of a national strategy for Student Accommodation.

(5) Equity of Access in Higher Education

The outcome under this strategic objective is that the HEA, through policy direction and strategic dialogue, facilitates the development of a higher education system that is characterised by equality of opportunity, with clear access, transfer and progression pathways and flexibility in modes of learning well mainstreamed into the higher education system. The key objectives and KPIs towards achievement of this outcome in 2017 are:

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
5.1 To continue implementation of National Access Plan	- Access targets are included in new DES System Performance Framework and HEA/HEI Compacts	Q1 and Q3	CR
5.2 To monitor progress on access targets	- Access performance is part of every strategic dialogue meeting and informs the overall performance report for each HEI	Q3	CR
5.3 To conduct mid-term review of National Access Plan	- Completed mid-term review with actions and targets revised as appropriate	Commenced Q4	CR
5.4 To allocate and monitor funds PATH Strand 1	- PATH Strand 1 funding allocation announced and projects begin leading to increased access to initial teacher education from access target groups	Q2 Recurrent monitoring	CR
5.5 To complete strategy for non-completion among the target groups	- Agreed strategy with the HEIs that is informed by the National Forum for Teaching and Learning - Long-term KPI is increased completion rates for students from target groups	Phase 1 Q3	CR

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
5.6 To develop a plan for improved access data indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Completed policy study to inform approach - Pilot study underway of geo-coding new entrants to higher education - Final plan agreed 	Q4	CR
5.7 To implement recommendations arising from the review of the Student Assistance Fund (SAF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of recommendations managed by a HEA steering Committee. 	Q1	CR
5.8 To complete review of Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Completed review including clear recommendations on the future development of the Fund and followed by process of recommendations implementation 	Q2	CR
5.9 To liaise with DES on the application of the equity of access budget measures introduced in Budget 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finalised approach on the application of the measures and various roles and responsibilities 	Q2	CR
5.10 To support the DES and HEIs in the implementation of recommendations arising from the DES review of access to higher education for lone parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To be determined, following completion of review in early 2017 	Q1	CR
5.11 To support a review of access offices in Higher Education institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Completed review identifying best practice and making recommendations for future policy 	Commenced 2017	CR

(6) An Enhanced Partnership with Enterprise

The outcome under this strategic objective is that the HEA, through policy direction and strategic dialogue, facilitates the development of a system of higher education institutions that are closely connected with their regions and with enterprise so that skills and enterprise research needs can be anticipated and addressed and so that graduates emerge from higher education with the appropriate skills sets to be effective in the workplace. The key objectives and KPIs towards achievement of this outcome in 2017 are:

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
6.1 To continue active engagement with enterprise agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active strategic engagement with agencies such as EI, IDA, IBEC and AmCham strengthens the relationship between higher education promotion and future employment and innovation. - Institutions are required to develop employability statements for courses and/or disciplines as set out in the National Skills Strategy 	Recurrent	VP
6.2 To manage the 2nd intake of Springboard+ 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remaining places available for 2016/17 filled 	Q1-Q2	VP
6.3 To manage the rollout of Springboard+ 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme evaluation process underway - Programme and marketing campaign launched - Surveys of participants and trend analysis carried out and reported 	Q2-3	VP

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
6.4 To continue collaboration on key government strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HEA contributes to the implementation of the Action Plan for Jobs, the ICT Skills Action Plan and the National Skills Strategy to ensure that HEA strategic goals are reflected in and supported by a range of initiatives. - Support rollout of new Government strategies in relation to Entrepreneurship and Languages due to be published in 2017 - Calls for funding are successfully managed for additional ICT places, ICT summer camps, ICT Level 9 conversion courses and ICT retention measures 	Recurrent Q2 onwards	VP
6.5 To develop and implement new apprenticeships in collaboration with Solas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development and funding of new apprenticeships in higher education - Support is provided to the Apprenticeship Council - A memorandum of understanding is agreed with SOLAS to support mutual co-operation in this new area of work 	Recurrent Q3	VP
6.6 To liaise with HEIs and Solas on the delivery of the off the job phases of existing apprenticeships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effective engagement with HEIs in the provision of the off the job phases of apprenticeships to meet the increasing demand for places 	Recurrent	VP

Objective	Key Performance Indicator	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility
6.7 To manage a call for the delivery of summer camps in Entrepreneurship	- Proposals evaluated, fund allocated and successful projects are run and reported on	Q1-Q3	VP
6.8 To run the National Employers Survey	- Develop and run third national employers survey in collaboration with the Regional Skills Fora and enterprise and state agencies.	Q4	VP

4. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

4.1 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Department and HEA are aware of the increasing responsibilities and oversight required in relation to governance and accountability in the Higher Education sector. Cognisant of this, the two organisations are working together in order to strengthen the oversight processes and will be agreeing and implementing strengthened procedures during the year.

The HEA will ensure that appropriate governance and assurance mechanisms and structures are in place in the HEA and higher education institutions. The HEA will ensure that the Code of Practice for the Governance of State bodies and the Codes of Governance for Universities and IOTs are in place in the HEA and HEI's respectively and will monitor continued implementation.

The HEA will ensure that circulars that issue from time to time from the Departments of Finance/Public Expenditure and Reform are notified immediately to HEIs and will monitor implementation.

The HEA shall submit to the Minister an annual report (which includes the audited accounts of the HEA). The annual report shall be submitted to the Minister no later than one month following the completion of the audit of HEA accounts by the C&AG or six months after the end of the relevant year, whichever is the earlier. Where it is the latter, and the C&AG sign off on the accounts is not complete, the HEA must submit its audited accounts separately within one month of the C&AG sign off.

4.2 FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

A Financial Accountability Framework is agreed separately between the Department and the HEA. It sets out details on the structures in place to provide for the necessary assurances to the Department of Education and Skills in respect of the funding advanced to the HEA for (a) the administration of the Authority and (b) the disbursement of funding to the Higher Education Institutions. The document is set out at Appendix 1.

4.3 FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS, INCLUDING MONITORING AND REPORTING

The HEA will effectively manage the public monies provided and will ensure regular monitoring and verification arrangements to ensure best practice is followed and financial controls are adhered to in order to safeguard the public funding provided from the Exchequer.

Funding for the provision and administration of grants will be advanced to the HEA in line with agreed procedures which are set out in the grant allocation letters which issue from the Department each year. The HEA will provide financial reports and statistical data as required including data to support the preparation of budget and performance assessment and reporting.

4.3.1 Financial Procedures

Written procedures

The HEA will ensure that there are written financial procedures in place which reflect, and are in compliance with the requirements of the Public Financial Procedures and other relevant financial regulations and guidelines including the requirements of Department of Public Expenditure and Reform circular 13/2014. These procedures will be kept under ongoing review having particular regard to the findings of the annual internal review of the effectiveness of the HEA's system of internal controls and audits.

Grant payments

The HEA will agree with the Department a profile setting out proposed drawdown of funding for the year. Requisitions, signed by the agreed signatories should be made in line with agreed profiles. In the event of the HEA not requiring full drawdown or requiring an increase for any particular month details of such a variation on agreed profile must be put to the Department in advance for agreement.

The Department will issue grant allocation letters to the HEA each year in respect of each subhead. The HEA will comply with the requirements set out in these letters.

The Department will process requests for funding, where possible, within five working days.

Pension Related Deductions (PRDs)

The HEA must pay over appropriate PRDs, in respect of public service employees as defined in the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act (FEMPI) 2009, to the Department by the fifteenth day of each month in respect of the preceding month's payroll and by a date specified annually in respect of December payroll.

4.3.2 Risk Management and Compliance

The HEA will adopt a structured approach to risk and control in respect of the Authority which will provide for the identification and control of financial risks and for the ongoing improvement of its financial management systems. The HEA will monitor the statements of internal control produced by HEIs and reviewed by C&AG including the risk and control mechanisms in place in each higher education institution.

Compliance with Public Sector Legislation and Policy

The HEA will comply with all relevant public financial procedures and legislation. These include public procurement, taxation legislation including income tax and withholding tax, employment and pension legislation, prompt payment of accounts and all other relevant legislation applicable to bodies in receipt of Exchequer funding. The Department must be satisfied that the arrangements for the general control, management and administration of public funds are satisfactory and the HEA will ensure that proper accounts are kept and audited and are available for audit by the C&AG in a timely manner.

In line with the provisions of Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Circular 13/2014 the Department has the right to inspect the records of the HEA if required.

Annual Accounts

As required under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State bodies, and in line with the sanctioned extension of time, the HEA will submit a copy of draft unaudited accounts by 31st March of each year.

Section 8 of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act, 1993, provides for the audit by the C&AG of the accounts/financial statements of the HEA.

Section 11 requires that a copy of the Annual Accounts should be submitted to the Department once signed off on by the C&AG. The HEA should submit the accounts to the Department within one month after C&AG sign off. The Department will lay the Audited Accounts before the Houses of the Oireachtas within two months of receipt in the Department.

The audited accounts should be accompanied by a comprehensive report from the Chairperson affirming compliance with all requirements as set out in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

5. AGREEMENT APPROVAL

**Mary Doyle, Deputy Secretary General
Department of Education and Skills**

Date

**Dr Graham Love, Chief Executive Officer
Higher Education Authority**

Date

APPENDIX 1

Financial Accountability Framework

Department of Education and Skills and the Higher Education Authority

Note: This framework works in conjunction with the Service Level Agreement agreed between both parties

Key Accountability Objective and Responsibilities:

Service Commitments:

- ❖ Proper and effective use of public funding
- ❖ Effective control, audit and accountability measures
- ❖ Cost effective and efficient delivery of services

Responsibility	Commitment	Key Performance Indicators
Governance Assurance and Accountability Structures	<p>The HEA to ensure that its own governance and assurance mechanisms and structures are effective and adequate</p> <p>The HEA shall require confirmation from the higher education institutions under its designation, that governance and assurance mechanisms and structures in place are effective and adequate</p> <p>That a system of early warning reporting is in place for any potential problems to be highlighted and addressed. HEA will report to DES on a quarterly basis (or immediately in the case of extreme case) of any non-compliance issues/financial irregularities/accountability issues identified by HEA, arising from C&AG liaison or otherwise, in the previous quarter</p>	<p>) No. of non-compliance issues as highlighted by the C&AG and/or rolling reviews of corporate governance carried out by HEA</p> <p>) No. of issues where early warning identified</p>

	<p>Governance and assurance mechanisms for the HEA to be reviewed on an ongoing basis</p> <p>Governance and assurance mechanisms for HEI's under its designation to be reviewed on an ongoing basis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">) Up to date Code of Practice and verification/assurance reporting in place by Dept for HEA) Verification of up to date Codes of Governance in place in each HEI) Annual system of reporting by HEIs to HEA to confirm compliance with key elements of the code) System of rolling reviews to provide further assurances of HEI compliance
Financial Control and Reporting	<p>HEA to account for funding provided for HEIs. Overview of budget meetings to be supplied to the Department. Details of financial position of each HEI to be supplied to the Department following budget meetings each year</p> <p>Written financial procedures to be in place in the HEA and updated as required. These procedures to include clearly defined roles and responsibilities with segregation of duties as appropriate for all financial transactions and reporting</p> <p>Financial system must have adequate audit trail to ensure full history of each transaction can be accessed and accounted for</p> <p>HEA to supply required bank account and cashflow details as required under the grant allocation letters terms and conditions issued by the Department each year</p> <p>HEA to be in compliance with public financial procedures and with other relevant circulars</p> <p>The HEA shall require assurance from the higher education institutions under its designation regarding compliance with public financial procedures and Government circulars by HEI's</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">) Timely, accurate and sufficiently detailed reporting and information supplied so that Department is aware of financial position of HEIs) Procedures in place and up to date) Audit trail available for inspection) Payments processed upon receipt of information) Full compliance by HEA and assurances from HEIs under monitoring & review procedures outlined above) Checks of compliance prove same are in place

	<p>HEA to be in compliance with financial requirements under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies</p> <p>The HEA shall require assurance from the higher education institutions under its designation that the HEI's are in compliance with financial requirement of the Codes of Governance for the sectors</p>	
Audit arrangements	<p>An audit committee should be in place and a properly constituted internal audit function with a formal charter as required under the Code of Practice</p> <p>The HEA shall require assurance from the higher education institutions under its designation that audit committees are in place</p> <p>Audit Committee should meet at least four times per year</p> <p>The HEA shall require assurance from the higher education institutions under its designation that the Audit Committee meets four times per year</p> <p>The Board is responsible for the body's system of financial control and should review annually the effectiveness of same. A Report regarding same must form part of the annual accounts</p> <p>Draft unaudited annual accounts to be submitted to the Department not later than three months after the end of the financial year.</p> <p>Annual Accounts of the HEA, signed off on by the C&AG, to be submitted to the Department within one month of the audit certificate on the accounts being issued by the C&AG</p> <p>Annual Accounts of the HEIs, signed off on by the C&AG, to be submitted to the Department by the HEIs within one month of the audit certificate on the accounts being issued by the C&AG</p>	<p>) Confirmation of committee in place by HEA to DES</p> <p>) Confirmation of committee in place by HEI's to HEA</p> <p>) Confirmation to DES by HEA</p> <p>) Confirmation to HEA by HEI's</p> <p>) Confirmation in Chairpersons report and A/Cs of HEA to be submitted to DES</p> <p>) Confirmation in annual governance statements and A/Cs of HEIs to be submitted to HEA</p> <p>) HEA draft accounts submitted to DES by 31st March</p> <p>) A/Cs of HEA received and laid before Oireachtas in a timely manner</p> <p>) A/Cs of HEIs received and laid before Oireachtas in a timely manner</p>
Risk Management	<p>As required under the Code of Practice, the HEA should have a Risk Management Policy and the Board should approve the risk management</p>	<p>) Risk Management Policy in Place in HEA</p>

	<p>framework and monitor its effectiveness. The board should review material risk incidents and note or approve management's actions</p> <p>The HEA shall require assurance from the higher education institutions under its designation that each HEI has a similar arrangement in place</p>	<p>) Confirmation that Risk Management Policy in place in HEIs</p>
Procurement	<p>The HEA must ensure that public procurement policy is adhered to and that when commissioning public services that economy, efficiency, transparency and effectiveness is achieved. There should be a Procurement Plan in place</p> <p>The HEA shall require assurance from the higher education institutions under its designation that each HEI confirms compliance with public procurement policy</p>	<p>) Public Procurement Policy in place in HEA</p> <p>) Confirmation of compliance with Public Procurement Policy from HEIs</p>
Travel and Subsistence	<p>The HEA should adopt and comply in all respects with the circulars issued from time to time regarding travel and subsistence. If significant annual expenditure on foreign travel by members of the staff or the Board occurs, appropriate procedures should be in place to monitor, report, and enforce the relevant rules and requirements</p> <p>A Travel Framework should be in place</p> <p>The HEA shall require assurance from the higher education institutions under its designation that each comply with public sector guidelines on travel and subsistence</p>	<p>) Travel Framework in place in HEA</p> <p>) Confirmation of compliance with public sector travel policy from HEIs</p>
Tax	<p>The HEA must ensure full compliance with taxation laws and ensure that all tax liabilities are paid on or before due dates. Tax clearance requirements must be adhered to with regards the payment of grants, subsidies and any other similar type payments</p> <p>A copy of the Tax Clearance Certificate must be made available to the Department so as to ensure payment of Exchequer funding can be made.</p> <p>The HEA shall require assurance from the higher education institutions under its designation that each HEI confirms compliance with Taxation laws</p>	<p>) Current Tax Clearance certificate submitted to DES by HEA</p>

) Confirmation of compliance with taxation laws from HEIs to HEA
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