

Higher Education Authority

Report of special meeting held 17th May 2016

Present Mr. Bahram Bekhradnia (via teleconference)
 Dr. Mary Canning (via teleconference)
 Ms Siobhán Harkin (via teleconference)
 Dr. Stephen Kinsella, Acting Chair (via teleconference)
 Dr. Jim Mountjoy
 Mr. Kevin Donoghue
 Mr. Gordon Ryan (via teleconference)
 Dr. Brian Thornes (via teleconference)
 Mr. Declan Walsh (via teleconference)

In attendance: Mr. Tom Boland
 Mr. Padraic Mellett

1. Purpose of the meeting

1.1 The purpose of the meeting was to consider the report of the Expert Selection Panel established by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) to manage the appointment of a new CEO in accordance with the procedures agreed by the Board at its January meeting. The panel included two HEA Board members, Dr. Canning and Dr. Kinsella, acting chair.

2. Report of the Expert Selection Panel

2.1 The Acting Chair advised members that the unanimous decision of the panel was that no person be appointed to the position. He outlined the recruitment process and noted that the competition attracted some excellent candidates who demonstrated the required competencies for aspects of the post. None however met all of the requirements to the required standard.

2.2 The next stage was to engage with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) on the appointment of an interim CEO and to discuss with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform the terms and conditions for the post. The CEO briefed members on preliminary discussions he has had with the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General in DES. The former, while indicating the outcome was a disappointment, noted that failure to fill a senior vacancy was becoming increasingly common in the public sector. The CEO suggested that the Board should not rush to proceed to a new competition. In addition to salary, there may be other factors the Board may wish to consider. The Acting Chair agreed that failure to appoint a candidate was not down to any one single factor. The CEO indicated that he was prepared to stay one month longer, if necessary, while arrangements are put in place to appoint an interim CEO.

2.3 Members agreed that the Selection Panel made the correct decision notwithstanding the disappointing outcome, particularly for internal candidates. Issues raised;

- Source of possible interim CEOs. The CEO noted this will need to be a joint HEA-DES initiative.
- The process demonstrated the importance and complexity of the role.
- Role of PAS – the Acting Chair noted that they were a little sanguine with the outcome noting this has occurred with other recruitment processes.
- International search process

2.4 It was agreed that the Board will consider the matter further at its next scheduled meeting. The CEO advised that the DES is unlikely to have finalized its thinking on the matter by then as the Deputy Secretary General is on leave. It was agreed that Mr. Mellett would circulate the report prepared by Mercers in 2015 on the salary for the post.

3. Any other business

3.1 Members noted and welcomed the decision of UL to withdraw its legal action against the Limerick Leader.

Padraic Mellett
31st May 2016