

Quality and Qualifications Ireland and the Higher Education Authority: Engagement between the agencies and the higher education institutions in relation to information provision

On 1 January 2015, a Memorandum of Understanding between the HEA and QQI came into operation. The Memorandum provides an agreed framework for cooperation and communication between the two organisations in the interests of the higher education sector as a whole.

The MoU sets out four key commitments agreed by QQI and the HEA for the period 1st January 2015 to 31st December 2017; namely:

- Commitment to coherence of approach;
- Commitment to alignment of activities;
- Commitment to Ireland in an international context;
- Commitment to partnerships for enhancement.

Against each commitment, associated actions are listed which will contribute to the realisation of that commitment.

One of the key areas of activity in 2015 is the establishment of a HEA-QQI MoU Forum which will meet a number of times during the year. A number of themes will be explored by the Forum, and in particular, the Forum has decided that it would be a useful exercise to explore the issue of information which higher education institutions are requested to provide to the HEA and QQI. The discussion paper which follows aims to capture the current situation regarding information provision to both organisations and identify collective aspirations for data and information collection and analysis.

This document first sets out the statutory and other obligations of the two agencies and the higher education institutions in relation to information provision and reporting. Then it sets out how each agency engages with higher education institutions from the agencies' perspectives. Finally, a brief comparison of the information requested as part of the QQI Annual Institutional Quality Report and the HEA Institutional Performance Compact processes is provided.

It is intended that this document should provide scope for further discussion and identification of areas of further potential progress.

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Statutory and Other Obligations

This section sets out the statutory and other obligations of QQI, the HEA and the higher education institutions in relation to data and information provision.

[QQI's statutory obligations regarding data and information, data procedures, and the provision of information by higher education institutions to QQI](#)

The following items relating to data are set out in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012:

Co-operation with QQI	
Page 15 Section 13(3)	Upon being requested to do so by the Authority, a relevant provider, a body authorised to make awards in the State or a professional recognition body shall provide any information the Authority requires for the performance of its functions in so far as those functions relate to the functions of the provider, the body authorised by law to make awards in the State or the professional recognition body as the case may be, including information in respect of completion rates, within the time specified in the request.

Obligation of providers to prepare quality assurance procedures	
Page 23 Section 28(4)(c)	The provider must prepare a report which sets out the results of a review by the provider of the application of its quality assurance procedures and what measures (if any) the provider considers necessary arising out of the review to establish, ascertain, maintain and improve the quality of education, training, research and related services provider by the provider and submit this to QQI

Quality Assurance Procedures and relevant providers, other than previously established universities	
Page 25 Section 30(1)	Providers submit draft QA procedures to QQI

Procedures for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners	
Page 45 Section 56(11)	Previously established university shall provide a copy of its QA procedures to QQI

Directions of QQI following review of procedures for QA; review; access, transfer and progression and the IEM

Page 46
Section 35 3
Section 58(4)

The provider (relevant provider, not university or linked provider) shall provide QQI with information from time to time and when requested to do so by QQI regarding compliance by the provider with a direction issued to the provider under that subsection.

Register of Providers

Page 60
Section 78

QQI shall establish and maintain a Register of Providers. QQI shall enter information in the register regarding providers authorised to use the International Education Mark and that has PEL arrangements in place.

(Providers name, address, contact details, whether provider is authorised to use IEM, PEL arrangements in place name of programme, details of arrangements in place)

Database of Programmes

Page 61
Section 79

QQI shall establish and maintain a database providing information on –
awards recognised within the NFQ
programmes which lead to awards recognised within the NFQ
any other programmes QQI thinks appropriate

Database shall include the following award info:

Name of award; awarding body/bodies that makes award; NFQ level; award type.

Database shall include the following programme info:

Name of the provider; programme title; programme duration; award programme leads to; awarding body/bodies; is it NFQ award?; NFQ level; award type, who reviews QA procedures for provider; whether provider is authorised to use IEM.

The HEA's statutory obligations regarding data and information, data analysis, and the provision of information by higher education institutions to the HEA

The following items relating to data are set out in the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971:

Main functions of the HEA	
Section 3	An tÚdarás [the HEA] shall, in addition to the specific functions given to it by this Act, have the general functions of— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) furthering the development of higher education, (b) assisting in the co-ordination of State investment in higher education and preparing proposals for such investment, (c) promoting an appreciation of the value of higher education and research, (d) promoting the attainment of equality of opportunity in higher education, (e) promoting the democratisation of the structure of higher education.

Supply of data and information	
Section 11	An institution of higher education shall supply to An tÚdarás [the HEA] all such information relative to the institution as An tÚdarás may require for the purpose of performing its functions.

Analysis of data and information	
Section 7	An tÚdarás may, annually or at such other intervals as it may determine, require any institution of higher education to submit a statement of its financial position to An tÚdarás and it shall be the duty of every institution of higher education to comply with any requirements which are imposed on it under this section.
Section 13	An tÚdarás may institute and conduct studies on such problems of higher education and research as it considers appropriate and may publish reports of such studies.

The HEA's other obligations and role regarding information provision

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 sets out further the mandate of the HEA, which encompasses the responsibility to create a well-coordinated system of higher education institutions, each with a clear mission, which is capable in its totality of delivering on national objectives set for the system by the Minister for Education and Skills.

This role requires that the HEA:

- Adopt a focus on outputs and performance of each HEI, and the system as a whole.
- Negotiate a compact with each HEI and agree regional cluster outcomes.
- Monitor performance against agreed deliverables, and
- Provide funding based on performance.

Strategic dialogue is the key means through which this role is being exercised. Through it, the HEA engages with the institutions to ensure that institutional mission and strategy is aligned with national strategy and that national goals are being delivered by the sector as a whole. In the case of each compact, this sets out how the HEI (and cluster) is to contribute to national objectives (determined by the Minister with HEA advice). The outcomes agreed will be subject to annual assessment and funding in part determined by performance.

In addition to the overarching nature of strategic dialogue and compacts, the HEA has in place other accountability arrangements.

- A governance framework for the HEIs, agreed with the HEA and reflecting current best practice in the public sector is in place. Institutions must report to the HEA annually on compliance with the governance framework.
- HEIs are required to supply the HEA with reliable and prompt reports on how their resources have been spent, as well as other statistical returns related to performance and outputs.
- Financial reports are provided once a year, but with the provision for more frequent reporting, if an institution is thought to be facing financial problems.

The HEA has recently finalised *“A Strategy for Data Development and Knowledge Management in Irish Higher Education: HEA priorities 2015 to 2018”*. The over-arching aim of this Data Strategy is to produce and develop high quality, consistent, relevant and timely statistical information to contribute to the development of higher education policy and services and to meet the needs of the learner, education providers and other users of higher education data nationally as well as internationally. To fully embrace the HEA's expanded role in performance management and accountability at institutional and system level, the HEA have identified a number of key data developments for the period 2015-2018. The priority actions in terms of data development will be:

1. Further improving the quality and relevance of the Student Record System with a particular focus on internationalisation, flexible learning and joint programme provision.
2. The creation of a new national database on graduate outcomes.
3. Other development will focus on the improvement of our data in the areas of institutional staff returns, the participation of the under-represented groups in higher education and embedding of the perspectives of students and employers

through the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and the National Employers Survey.

Universities' statutory obligations regarding data and information provision

The following items relating to data are set out in the Universities Act, 1997:

Strategic Plans	
Section 34	(3): As soon as practicable after it approves the strategic development plan under subsection (2), the governing authority shall provide a copy of the plan to An tÚdarás [the HEA] and to the Minister.

Quality Assurance Procedures	
Section 35	<p>(1): A governing authority, in consultation with the academic council, shall, as soon as practicable after the governing authority is established under this Act and at such other times as it thinks fit, require the chief officer to establish procedures for quality assurance aimed at improving the quality of education and related services provided by the university.</p> <p>(2) The procedures shall include—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the evaluation, at regular intervals and in any case not less than once in every 10 years or such longer period as may be determined by the university in agreement with An tÚdarás [the HEA], of each department and, where appropriate, faculty of the university and any service provided by the university, by employees of the university in the first instance and by persons, other than employees, who are competent to make national and international comparisons on the quality of teaching and research and the provision of other services at university level, and (b) assessment by those, including students, availing of the teaching, research and other services provided by the university, and shall provide for the publication in such form and manner as the governing authority thinks fit of findings arising out of the application of those procedures.

Budgets and Accounts	
Section 37	(1): A governing authority shall, on or before the 1st day of March in each financial year or such other date as An tÚdarás [the HEA] may approve (which may be a date before the commencement of the financial year to which the statement relates), prepare and submit to An tÚdarás, in such form and manner as may from time to time be approved by An tÚdarás, a statement of the proposed expenditure and expected income of the university for the financial year.

Section 39	<p>(1): A university shall keep, in such form as may be approved by An tÚdarás [the HEA], all proper and usual accounts and records of all income received or expenditure incurred by it.</p> <p>(2): Accounts kept in pursuance of subsection (1) shall, to the extent directed by the Comptroller and Auditor General, be submitted annually by a university to the Comptroller and Auditor General, for audit, by such date as the Comptroller and Auditor General may from time to time determine and, immediately after the audit, a copy of the accounts, together with a copy of the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on the accounts, shall be presented by the university to An tÚdarás [the HEA] and to the Minister.</p>
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Staffing	
Section 51	<p>A university shall provide An tÚdarás [the HEA] with such information as An tÚdarás may from time to time request relating to the number of employees employed by the university, their composition by grade, their terms and conditions of employment (including their remuneration, fees, allowances, expenses and superannuation) and any other related matters.</p>

Application of HEA Act	
Section 49	<p>An tÚdarás [the HEA], in furtherance of its general functions under section 3 of the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971 , shall assist the universities in achieving the objectives of Chapters IV [Staff] , VII and VIII [Planning and Evaluation] of Part III [Finance, Property and Reporting] and may review—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategic development plans prepared in accordance with section 34 [Strategic Development Plan], • the procedures established in accordance with section 35 [Quality Assurance], • the policies set out in the statement provided for in section 36 [Equality Policy] and their implementation, and • the matters referred to in section 50 [Guidelines], having regard to any guidelines issued in accordance with that section and information provided in accordance with section 51 [Information on Staffing], <p>and may, following consultation with the universities, publish a report, in such form and manner as it thinks fit, on the outcome of any such review.</p>

Institutes of technology statutory obligations regarding information provision

The following items relating to data are set out in the Institutes of Technology Act, 2006:

Strategic Plans	
Section 22	(3): As soon as practicable after it approves the strategic development plan under subsection (2), the governing body shall provide a copy of the plan to An tÚdarás [the HEA] and to the Minister.

Budgets and Accounts	
Section 13	(1): A governing body shall, on or before the first day of March in each financial year or such other date as An tÚdarás [the HEA] may approve (which may be a date before the commencement of the financial year to which the statement relates), prepare and submit to An tÚdarás, in such form and manner as may from time to time be approved by An tÚdarás, a statement of the proposed expenditure and expected income of the college for the financial year.
Section 18	(1): A college shall keep, in such form as may be approved by An tÚdarás [the HEA], all proper and usual accounts and records of all income received or expenditure incurred by it. (2): Accounts kept in pursuance of subsection (1) shall, to the extent directed by the Comptroller and Auditor General, be submitted annually by a college to the Comptroller and Auditor General, for audit, by such date as the Comptroller and Auditor General may from time to time determine, and, immediately after the audit, a copy of the accounts, together with a copy of the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on the accounts, shall be presented by the college to An tÚdarás [the HEA] and to the Minister.

Staffing	
Section 16	(3): A college shall supply to An tÚdarás [the HEA] such information as An tÚdarás may from time to time request relating to the number of persons employed by the college, their composition by grade, their terms and conditions of employment (including their remuneration, fees, allowances, expenses and superannuation) and any other related matters.”.

Application of HEA Act	
Section 47	An tÚdarás [the HEA] may review— (a) the strategic development plan prepared in accordance with section 21C, and

	(b) the policies set out in the statement prepared under section 21D and their implementation by the Institute, and may, following consultation with the Institute, publish a report, in such form and manner as it thinks fit, on the outcome of any such review.”
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Institutions’ other obligations regarding data and information provision

The higher education institutions also comply with a Code of Governance. A Code of Governance has been agreed between the HEA and the two respective sectors (universities/colleges and institutes of technology). Institutions submit an annual statement of governance and internal control to the HEA, in the following format:

“The following information should be included in an annual governance statement signed by the Chief Officer and Chairperson and submitted to the HEA:

1. A statement affirming that the governing authority is responsible for and is satisfied that the university is in compliance with all statutory obligations applicable to the university that may be set out in legislation governing the establishment of the university or in other relevant legislation;
2. A statement confirming that a code of Governance and a Code of Conduct for Members and Employees have been adopted;
3. Financially significant developments affecting the university in the past year, including the establishment of subsidiaries or joint ventures and acquisitions, and major issues likely to arise in the short to medium term;
4. A statement affirming that Government policy on pay is being complied with;
5. A statement affirming that all appropriate procedures for financial reporting, internal audit, procurement and asset disposals are being carried out;
6. Confirmation that the Guidelines for the Appraisal and Management of Capital Proposals are being adhered to where appropriate;
7. Certification that Government travel policy requirements are being implemented in all respects;
8. Confirmation that the Guidelines on Achieving Value for Money in Public Expenditure as set out in the address by the Minister for Finance of 20 October 2005 and communicated to the universities are being followed;
9. A statement affirming the university’s compliance with tax laws;
10. Confirmation that a child protection policy is in place;
11. Confirmation that fees and/or expenses paid to members of governing authority are in accordance with the guidelines from the Department of Finance and are presented in the University’s Annual Report. A note on the schedule of fees and aggregate expenses payable to external governing authority members should be included;
12. Confirmation that a code of governance is in place in respect of trading subsidiaries (i.e. subsidiaries with annual turnover and employees), with annual statements

HEA QQI Memorandum of Understanding 2015 – 2017: Actions relating specifically to data and information provision

- 1(i) The HEA will satisfy itself within the process of strategic dialogue and other interactions, of the fulfilment by institutions of their quality assurance obligations, using the documented outcomes of legislative monitoring and quality review conducted by QQI in the form of annual dialogue or periodic review reports, and the Annual Institutional Quality Reports produced directly by institutions.
- 1(ii) Where available, QQI will utilise the data produced by the HEA to satisfy itself, within the process of annual dialogue and periodic review, of its institutional data requirements.
- 1(iii) The organisations will fully acquaint themselves with the reporting obligations of higher education institutions to both organisations and commit to reducing, with a view to eliminating where possible, requests for the same or similar information.
- 2(iv) The HEA will include QQI in the list of organisations with which data is shared under the terms and conditions for data-collection from higher education institutions.
- 4(iv) The organisations will work collaboratively with higher education institutions, including through the forum proposed above, to establish how to effectively interpret and utilise outputs, including data, produced at an institutional and sectoral level in order to inform quality and quality enhancement activities.

QQI processes for interacting with higher education institutions and information collected from HEIs

This section sets out QQI process for interacting with higher education institutions, through its Annual Institutional Quality Reports and Dialogue Meetings.

Annual Institutional Quality Reports (AIQR)

Background

Previously, the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) received Annual Institutional Reports from the seven universities and followed up with Annual Dialogue Meetings with each institution to discuss quality-related issues. QQI has continued and extended this practice.

AIQRs

Each designated awarding body (the seven universities, RCSI and DIT) submits an Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR) to QQI.

For the first time in 2015, each Institute of Technology submitted a Bridging Annual Institutional Quality Report (Bridging AIQR) to QQI.

The institutions are provided with a template report by QQI, which they are expected to complete and return. There are slight variances between the AIQR completed by the designated awarding bodies and the bridging AIQR completed by the Institutes of Technologies, as 2015 was the first time the Institutes of Technologies submitted the reports so there is more information for them to report on.

The report content is monitored annually and working groups (comprising QQI and institution representatives) are in place to amend and improve the report template. The current AIQR and bridging AIQR templates are contained in Appendix 1.

It was agreed that both reports will be titled the Annual Institutional Quality Report for the coming reporting period, i.e. September 2014 until August 2015.

Timeframe

AIQRs were generally submitted to QQI by the institution in January/February each year and covered the preceding calendar year from January to December. It was agreed that the reporting period would change to the academic year from 2015. As a result, the AIQRs submitted in January 2015 covered the period 1 January – 31 August 2014. The AIQRs that will be submitted in January/February 2016 and beyond will cover the preceding academic year, i.e. the report on the period September 2014 until August 2015 will be submitted in January/February 2016.

Bridging AIQRs submitted in January/February 2015 covered the preceding academic year, i.e. they reported on the period September 2013 to August 2014.

Publication

QQI currently publishes a summary report on the AIQRs on its website. The most recent summary report (Summary Report 2013) is located at [http://www.qqi.ie/Pages/Annual-Institutional-Reports-\(AIRs\)-of-Designated-Awarding-Bodies---Analysis-2013.aspx](http://www.qqi.ie/Pages/Annual-Institutional-Reports-(AIRs)-of-Designated-Awarding-Bodies---Analysis-2013.aspx).

It has been agreed that AIQRs will all be published from the reporting period Sept 2014 – August 2015 and beyond, on QQI and the websites of the institutions.

Dialogue Meetings with institutions

Background

QQI and each DAB has a Dialogue Meeting (DM) each year. The meetings are designed to consider the AIQR and discuss any aspect regarding follow-up on the AIQR, provide an overview of strategic and internal and external factors impacting on institutional quality assurance and any issues the institution would like to discuss.

It was agreed that Dialogue Meetings would be extended to Institutes of Technology in 2014. QQI met with each Institute of Technology for the first time between November 2014 and February 2015. The operation of the DMs and their relationship with the Annual Institutional Report and periodic review is an evolving process and is currently being further considered.

Timeframe

For 2015, QQI and DABs DMs took place in April/May. QQI and Institutes of Technology meetings took place from November 2014 until February 2015. It is envisaged that DMs will take place during March and April each year from 2016.

Publication

DM meeting notes are agreed between QQI and the institution. These meeting notes are not published.

Storage of Data

The AIRs, AIQRs and DM meeting notes are stored on the QQI server.

Processing data and information contained in the AIR/AIQR and the DM

Information contained in the current and previous AIQRs and in the DM notes from previous years is reviewed in advance of the DM with the institution. Particular issues that were highlighted in previous years are followed up upon etc.

QQI may also review particular themes within the AIQR and DMs. For example, in 2015, QQI reviewed relationships between institutions and their collaborators/linked providers in Ireland, with a view to having a clear picture of all national arrangements of this kind.

HEA processes for interacting with HEIs and data and information collected from HEIs

HEA Interactions with higher education institutions

This section sets out the process by which HEA interacts with institutions, and details the frequency and mode of interactions.

It should be noted at the outset that the HEA regularly engages with the institutions in relation to the collection of ad-hoc data, to provide replies to parliamentary questions and emerging policy issues. These are not included in the summaries below.

The HEA engages with the institutions across its range of functions. Internally, the HEA is arranged into a number of sections, which include amongst others:

- System Funding
- System Governance and Performance Management
- Policy and Strategic Planning, which includes Policy Development, Research Policy, Internationalisation/European Programmes and Statistics
- Skills and Enterprise Engagement
- The National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education
- The Irish Research Council

Each of these sections interacts with institutions in relation to the collection of data. There are some other sections of the HEA which do not engage in data collection from the institutions (e.g. Communications, Personnel and Accounts).

Systems Funding

Systems Funding is responsible for the allocation of recurrent and capital funding to the institutions. It is also responsible for ensuring that financial and governance frameworks are adhered to by institutions.

The Systems Funding section is responsible for the administration of the Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM), a student numbers based model used to allocate funding. It also engages with institutions on other grants paid to institutions, and engages with institutions in relation to pensions. Systems Funding is also responsible for monitoring the governance returns of the institutions. Systems Funding is also currently responsible for the collection of staffing data from the institutions, though it is anticipated that this function will transfer to the Statistics section in the coming years as a staff database is implemented. The section has responsibility for the administration of co-funding associated with a number of European Funds, namely the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). The section is responsible for engaging with the institutions in respect of capital developments.

The section's main formal interaction with the institutions is during the annual budget and accountability meetings held in spring of each year. The section liaises with a wide range of institutional staff, including the Finance Offices, the HR Offices, Building Units, Pensions Units and Vice Presidents Academic (Registrars).

Systems Governance and Performance Management

Systems Governance and Performance Management is responsible for the implementation and development of the Strategic Dialogue process with the institutions. It is responsible for the development of performance compacts and reporting on system performance to the Minister for Education and Skills. The Section also has responsibility to deliver on the recommendations of the National Strategy for Higher Education in relation to the development of regional clusters, technological universities, institutions consolidation etc. It is also responsible for the process of the allocation of performance funding to the institutions.

The section mainly liaises with the President's Offices and other senior management of the institutions.

Policy and Strategic Planning

Policy and Strategic Planning spans a number of areas, including Policy Development, Research Policy, Internationalisation/European Programmes and Statistics:

Policy Development and Research Policy engage mainly on an ad-hoc basis with institutions in relation to emerging policy research policy issues (e.g. Transitions Reform, Horizon 2020, the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation etc.). The Policy section engages with a number of sectoral bodies, such as the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, the Irish Universities Association, Institutes of Technology Ireland, SOLAS, QQI etc. The Research Policy section engages with staff in the Research Offices and with the Research Vice-Presidents.

Internationalisation/European Programmes administers a wide variety of programmes with a global focus. These include acting as a national contact point/ coordinator for exchange programmes, such as Erasmus+ and Science without Borders, assisting in the implementation of scholarships, such as the Government of Ireland Scholarships, and administering international funding and collaboration programmes. This section liaises mainly with the institutions through their International Offices.

Statistics engages with institutions mainly in relation to the collection of student record data, and generally engages with Academic Vice Presidents (Registrars), admissions and IT staff in the institutions. Statistics is also responsible for the annual survey of graduate outcomes and the Irish Survey of Student Engagement. It also engages with institutions on the Eurostudent Survey and other national and international statistical reports.

Skills and Enterprise Engagement

A **Skills and Enterprise Engagement** unit co-ordinates and drives progress on collaboration between higher education and enterprise. A key element of this work is the new Education and Enterprise Strategy, 2015-2020, which will be published in 2015. The Unit manages the Springboard+ programme and liaises with public, and private, providers through their Springboard+ co-ordinators. Data is collected on academic and employment outcomes of Springboard+ participants.

National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education

The **National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education** facilitates educational access and opportunity for groups who are under-represented in higher education. It manages a range of funding programmes, monitors and reports on progress in implementing the National Access Strategy and achieving set targets and outcomes, provides advice on national policy and promotes the rationale for access to higher education in a way that wins widespread practical support from the education and political authorities and the public at large. The National Office engages mainly with staff in the Access Offices of the institutions.

Irish Research Council

The **Irish Research Council** primarily funds early stage career researchers: namely, postgraduate students and postdoctoral researchers through a suite of programmes which partner with employers with particular attention to arts, humanities and social sciences research. The main aim of the IRC funding programmes is to provide up to four years of funding for PhD students where it can be shown that the student is getting a quality experience and is developing additional knowledge and competencies beyond the core research work. The IRC engages with staff in the Research Offices and with the Research Vice-Presidents.

Data obtained from HEIs

Method of collection, volume of data returned, when and how data is stored, how data is processed and used/ is data returned in a processed format to institutions, is data published

Annual budget and accountability meetings

Institutions are required under legislation to return financial budgets to the HEA (Section 37 Universities Act, Section 13 Institutes of Technology Act). The HEA holds formal budget and accountability meetings with each institution in spring of each year to discuss the proposed budgets.

Institutions must set out their financial outturns for the previous year, and budget projections for the coming year. It must set out anticipated state grants, fees and other income as well as estimates of pay and non-pay expenditure.

Method of collection: Annual submission to the HEA as part of the budgetary process

Volume of data returned: Medium volume of financial information.

How data is processed and used: Financial analysis takes place.

Is data returned in a processed format to institutions?: No, this is not relevant.

Is data published?: No.

Performance compacts and projected institutional profiles

The current strategic dialogue process relates to the 2014-2016 period.

Under Cycle 1 of strategic dialogue (2014), HEIs worked with the HEA to agree a “performance compact”, as part of a strategic framework for the relationship between both parties. The compact sets out how each institution’s mission and goals align with national goals for higher education, providing the basis against which institutional performance will be measured and funding allocated. A projected statistical profile of the institutions for 2016/17 was provided by institutions as part of this Cycle.

Institutions set out performance objectives under seven headings:

1. Regional Clusters
2. Participation, Equal Access and Lifelong Learning
3. Excellent Teaching and Learning and Quality of the Student Experience
4. High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation
5. Enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange
6. Enhanced internationalisation
7. Institutional Consolidation

Under Cycle 2 of strategic dialogue (2015), institutions must submit a self-evaluation report setting out a review of the institution's performance against the first interim targets, as at year end 2014. This self-evaluation should include a description of any departures from the expected/agreed performance as set out in the mission-based performance compact 2014 – 2016 with particular reference to (a) institutional objectives and performance indicators, (b) interim targets set as at end 2014 and having regard to (c) March 2015 data returns to the HEA. The self-evaluation should, where possible, benchmark the institution's performance, either at institutional level or according to a particular objective, with that of chosen national and/ or international comparators.

Method of collection: Annual submission to the HEA as part of the strategic dialogue process

Volume of data returned: High volume of complex quantitative and qualitative information. The first set of compacts included ~650 objectives with in excess of 2,000 separate KPIs.

How data is processed and used: Significant data processing takes place, with internal HEA teams assigned to analyse submissions. External international expert panels are set up to evaluate submissions also.

Is data returned in a processed format to institutions?: Institutions are provided with sectoral analysis and spider diagrams illustrating relative performance

Is data published?: Compacts are published on HEA website.

Student number (enrolment and graduate) data

The most developed and robust information available on higher education derives from the *Student Record System*. This comprehensive database includes all learners in publicly-funded higher education institutions and an increasing number of private and independent institutions. The introduction of the SRS in 2006 enhanced the availability of timely, accurate and consistent statistics on higher education students enrolling and graduating from the 7 universities and the teacher training colleges. The inclusion of the institutes of technology in 2007 ensured accurate comparable data across 27 higher education institutions. The database holds information on all aspects of the student profile, student participation and graduate output.

Graduates are the key contribution that the higher education system makes to society and the economy. The *Student Record System* provides comprehensive information on graduates for example by region, discipline and level of qualification. Over recent years, there has been an increasing interest in skills forecasting and the HEA has a critical role in this important development. The *Action Plan for Jobs 2015* and other enterprise strategies rely on good data to anticipate future skills supply and to monitor progress towards specific skills targets. The *Student Record System* holds detailed individual records of all higher education graduates from levels 6-10, in a way that facilitates comprehensive and detailed reporting on graduate output by field of study. In addition, equivalent detail in respect of entrants and enrolments in higher education allows for accurate estimation of near-future supply of skilled graduates.

Method of collection: Data upload to the HEA's SRS database twice annually (November and March).

Volume of data returned: High volume, over 250,000 March records and 200,000 November records

When and how data is stored: Data is stored on the HEA's SRS relational database

How data is processed and used: Significant data processing takes place and contributes to major statistical reporting in the HEA, across its range of functions. Statistics are also provided to UOE, Eurostat and OECD (via the Department of Education and Skills).

Is data returned in a processed format to institutions?: Data is returned to the institutions for audit and verification purposes

Is data published?: Data is published in HEA Institutional Profiles annually, in HEA Key Facts and Figures annually and in the System Performance Report when published.

Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE)

The implementation of the *Irish Student Survey for Engagement (ISSE)* as a pilot in 2013, identified as a priority deliverable from the *National Strategy for Higher Education*, represented a significant advancement in our quantitative data collection on the student experience. The central aim of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement is to develop a valuable source of information about students' experiences of higher education in Ireland. The main purpose of the survey is to provide benefits to each institution and its students by helping to improve feedback and appropriate action.

Method of collection: Data upload to the ISSE system (not housed in the HEA). The HEA receives a copy of the records collected.

Volume of data returned: High volume, over 100,000 records annually.

How data is processed and used: Significant data processing takes place and contributes to the production of the report of the survey results.

Is data returned in a processed format to institutions?: Data is cleaned and returned to the institutions for internal analysis.

Is data published?: Data is published in the report of the survey results.

Graduate outcomes

The HEA houses a *First Destination of Graduates* database, which has been operated on an annual basis for over 30 years. This survey is used to track the progress of students nine months after graduation. It is currently run by the universities and teacher training colleges but not by the institutes of technology. Each university and college surveys their graduates across all NQF levels and fields of study using a common survey instrument.

The survey is currently under review, with the aim of a new survey being in place for March 2017, surveying 2016 graduates. This new survey will include the institutes of technology and incorporate longitudinal elements.

Method of collection: Spreadsheet return to the HEA annually by eight institutions (universities and DIT)

Volume of data returned: Medium volume, approx. 40,000 records annually

How data is processed and used: Significant data processing takes place and contributes to the production of the report of the survey results

Is data returned in a processed format to institutions?: No, institutions hold their own data, so this is not necessary

Is data published?: Data is published in the report of the survey results

Financial data

The HEA collects financial data from the institutions, mainly in the form of budgets and outturns. Institutions are required to provide the HEA with copies of Financial Statements once audited and finalised. The HEA also collects information on pension payments and liabilities.

Governance information

A governance framework is in place in the higher education institutions. Institutions must return a statement of governance and internal control to the HEA,

Institutional staffing data

The HEA gathers aggregate quarterly staff statistical information from the higher education institutions under its remit. These arrangements maintain information on the total number (WTE) of staff in higher education and they also provide high-level information on grade, salary level and gender.

The development of a *Staff Database* at the individual level has been a priority over recent years but has not been initiated due to resource constraints in the HEA. Implementation of a staff database will introduce consistent mechanisms for compiling and reporting data on personnel across the higher education system allowing for accurate and robust information on changes over time.

Method of collection: Spreadsheet return to the HEA quarterly from each HEI.

Volume of data returned: Quarterly aggregate statistics, low volume.

When and how data is stored: Stored electronically and in hard copy each quarter.

How data is processed and used: Limited data processing, as records are at aggregate level.

Is data returned in a processed format to institutions?: No, data processing is not necessary in this instance.

Is data published?: Data is published in HEA Institutional Profiles annually and in HEA Key Facts and Figures annually.

Other agencies

The HEA also engages in data-sharing arrangements with other state agencies.

The HEA and Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) have a memorandum of agreement in place which allows for the sharing of student record data. It is permitted under section 28 of the Student Support Act 2011 for the data controllers of bodies listed in Schedule 2 to the Act to process personal data for the relevant purposes of that Act. The purpose of the processing of data under this agreement is for the purpose of:

- obtaining information to determine whether an applicant is eligible for a grant,
- verifying data supplied as part of the application process,
- assisting in the processing of an application for a grant by a student and assisting in the payment of grants to students.

The HEA also engages with Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI) in its Annual Knowledge Transfer Survey (AKTS) and receives the data submitted by the institutions to KTI in response to the survey.

HEA Performance Compact and QQI Annual Institutional Quality Report: Comparison of information requested from HEIs

HEA - Mission-based Performance Compact	QQI – Annual Institutional Quality Report
<p>Regional clusters Provide a brief summary of HEI’s strategy and chosen objectives in relation to its regional cluster.</p> <p>This should set out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Member institutions ▪ Governance arrangements ▪ Priority objectives for the cluster 	<p>External engagement with Quality Assurance Comment on engagement activities on Clusters, Alliances and Mergers in the context of impact on quality assurance.</p>
<p>Participation, Equal Access and Lifelong Learning Provide a brief summary of HEI’s strategy and chosen objectives in relation to participation, equal access and lifelong learning.</p>	<p>Access, Transfer and Progression and the NFQ Note issues relating to credit, RPL, ATP generally or specifically arising from QA reports or other feedback on national standards supporting the QA of programme development. (any completion rates in the context of QA initiatives could also be mentioned here in addition to links schemes and FET connections.)</p>
<p>Excellent Teaching and Learning and Quality of the Student Experience Provide a brief summary of HEI’s strategy and chosen objectives in relation to excellent teaching and learning and quality of the student experience.</p> <p>This should set out:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vision underpinning the portfolio of undergraduate programmes 2. Approaches being taken to improve overall performance 3. How planned provision is aligned to institutional mission 	<p>Quality Assurance Activities A brief description of <i>student engagement</i> activity that has taken place or any proposed planned activities or innovations. Include any summary feedback on existing student engagement mechanisms discussed or considered by the QA governance. Experience of the national student survey and local surveys could also feature here in addition to any additional approaches to student engagement or empowerment.</p> <p>Outline any recent developments and future plans for the <i>enhancement of teaching and learning</i>. This section may consider the impact of</p>

	<p>quality policies and procedures on teaching, learning and research and on the outcomes of internal and external quality reviews considered by the Institute.</p> <p>Describe how initiatives to enhance teaching practice are shared internally, and across institutions, in order to enhance the experience of students, teachers and researchers. Identify trends and issues regarding successful student participation, retention, progression and completion are monitored and any measures taken to address issues identified.</p> <p>Comment on specific engagements with the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning.</p>
<p>High Quality, international competitive research and innovation Provide a brief summary of HEI's strategy and chosen objectives in relation to high quality, internationally competitive research and innovation.</p>	
<p>Enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange Provide a brief summary of HEI's strategy and chosen objectives in relation to enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange.</p>	
<p>Enhanced internationalisation Provide a brief summary of HEI's strategy and chosen objectives in relation to enhanced internationalisation.</p>	<p>Linked and Collaborative Provision Please use the table attached to set out the relationships with third party providers or other awarding bodies, as appropriate, providing as much information as available. Please note, direct access articulation arrangements and Erasmus arrangements are not to be included in this table.</p>
<p>Institutional Consolidation Provide a brief summary of HEI's strategy and chosen objectives in relation to institutional consolidation.</p>	