

## Higher Education Authority

### Report of the 384<sup>th</sup> Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2017 in 3 Shelbourne Buildings, Dublin 4.

- Present: <sup>1</sup>
- Mr Tony Donohoe
  - Professor Orla Feely
  - Dr Sharon Feeney
  - Ms Annie Hoey
  - Mr Michael Horgan, Chairman
  - Ms Darina Kneafsey
  - Dr Sinéad O’Flanagan
  - Mr Pól Ó Móráin
  - Dr John Wall
- Apology:
- Dr Judith Eaton
  - Dr Lynn Ramsey
- In attendance:
- Dr Graham Love
  - Mr Andrew Brownlee
  - Mr Fergal Costello
  - Dr Gemma Irvine
  - Mr Padraic Mellett
  - Dr Vivienne Patterson
  - Ms Caitríona Ryan
  - Mr Stewart Roche
  - Mr Peter Brown
  - Ms Nicky O’Connor (item 4)
  - Ms Brid Horan (item 5)
  - Ms Orla Christle (item 6)
  - Ms Jane Sweetman (item 6)
  - Ms Rosalind Henry, RSMUK (item 6)

#### **1. Report of 383<sup>rd</sup> Meeting**

1.1 The minutes were approved.

#### **2. Matters Arising**

2.1 No matters arising raised.

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<sup>1</sup> Members present for all items unless otherwise indicated.

### 3. CEO's Report

3.1 The CEO briefed members on developments as follows;

- UL Protected Disclosures – following a request from the new UL President, the DES has written to the CEO requesting that he make the necessary arrangements for an independent review. Dr Richard Thorn has been engaged to carry out the review and terms of reference have been agreed. It is hoped his report will be finalised in September, if not an interim report will be presented.
- The Executive hopes to finalise the terms of reference for a review on the implementation of KTI's IP framework in the HEIs by the end of this week. It was also hoped to have the terms of reference for a review of spin-out companies in WIT by the end of this week. This review will be more detailed than the current internal review. The intention is to look at best international practice as regard the management of rewards for IP.
- The above two reviews were not included in the original workplan and will incur significant financial and staff resources on the Executive. The CEO advised members that addressing protected disclosures from HEI staff was adding significantly to the CEO's workload. It was proposed to develop a framework for receipt of such disclosures. This may entail seeking legal advice on the range of matters which are covered by S.I. 339/2014.
- Members were briefed on a documentary RTE is working on, the HEA has received a number of media and FoI requests from RTE.
- Members were advised that the HEA did not suffer any disruption arising from the recent ransomware attacks. The IT Unit has been proactive in this area. There was no news on any of the HEIs being impacted by the ransomware attacks.
- Dr Eucharía Meehan has resigned as Director of the Irish Research Council to take up the post of Registrar and CEO of the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies. Peter Brown has been appointed interim Director, a competition to fill the post will be arranged shortly.
- Members were updated on the HEA's own budget as at the end of March, expenditure continues to be under budget.

3.2 Members raised the following issues;

- The need for a proactive Communications Strategy which highlights positive developments in the sector.
- The delay in announcing the outcome of the 2017 Springboard call will cause difficulties for the HEIs. Members were advised that the HEA has submitted its recommendations to the DES.
- Board vacancies – Members were briefed on the latest developments.

- Board papers, the Chair indicated he will discuss this further with the Executive. It was suggested that reports and other bulky material should be presented in a separate folder. The Chair also indicated there should be a review of the number of Executive staff at Board and Committee meetings.
- There will be a Members only session at the next Board meeting.

#### 4. HEA Strategic Plan

4.1 Dr. Irvine advised members that memorandum A 15/17 reflects contributions made at the Board strategy meeting in Croke Park. It will be subject to further refinement as the HEA engages with stakeholders. Members were requested to consider the new plan's vision, mission, values and strategic priorities. In relation to the latter there were two possible options, continue with the headings used in the last plan or adopt the headings outlined in the forthcoming System Performance Framework.

4.2 Members raised the following issues;

- Internal consultation – it was confirmed that a consultation session with staff was planned.
- To what extent is this a strategy for the HEA as an organization as distinct from a strategy for the HE system? The HEA has limited control as regard the latter, it can only seek to steer the system. It was noted however there can be scope for the HEA to provide leadership even in areas not directly within its ambit such as the transition from secondary to higher education. The HEA cannot be responsible for the strategic direction of the HEIs.
- There should be a review of the last strategy, how meaningful were the HEA's principles and values? The importance of transparency should be considered in any review of values.
- The vision statement should be short and succinct, this however requires careful crafting.
- Consideration should be given to including an ambitious objective such as the HEA being a beacon for public service innovation and engagement.
- The strategic priorities in the old plan should be maintained together with any new priorities outlined in the new performance framework.

**Decision:** Members noted the draft to date and endorsed the next steps as outlined in memorandum A 15/17.

## 5. Draft Interim Report of the Review of the Allocation Model for Funding Higher Education Institutions

5.1 The Chair welcomed Ms Brid Horan, Chair of the Expert Panel. Ms Horan in her address to the Board outlined the process to date. The panel was on target to have the final report finalised in June. Ms Horan and Mr. Brownlee outlined 8 broad areas which need to be addressed in developing options for a future funding model;

1. Rewarding mission diversity in a fair and transparent manner – maintaining the two pot system, investment in capacity building and scope for a competitive transformation fund.
2. Reflecting the cost of provision – consistent costing system and applying the weightings to the student contribution and free fees.
3. Capacity of the system to meet student demand – meeting the demographic bulge, need for an ongoing capital contribution, role of private providers.
4. Recognising research and innovation outcomes – review and expand research metrics in the universities, introduce a similar model in the IoTs.
5. Recognising access and retention – is a 0.33 premium sufficient and transparent? Are new metrics which are aligned with an access data strategy needed?
6. Allowing skills development to be effectively targeted – improved transparency, appropriateness of competitive funding to meet skills, an appropriate model for employers' contribution.
7. Recognising lifelong learning and workforce upskilling – part-time and on-line learning.
8. Embedding performance funding - How do we structure a reward based system for higher education institutions, is there a need for common metrics?

5.2 Members made the following observations

- Has consideration been given to the funding of level 6, there is a significant difference in costs between further and higher education.
- Capacity needs to be enhanced before additional funding is provided.
- A move towards a universal system of funding could contribute to the development of centres of excellence and eliminate wasteful duplication.
- Impact a single pot of funding would have for diversity. It was noted that there was already considerable diversity between institutions within each pot.
- Role of technology in enabling flexible provision. To some extent student demand will drive this. It was noted that there was already leaders in this area

and the HEA needs to be careful additional support did not lead to duplication of effort.

- How best embed a future innovation fund?
- Given the capacity constraints in Dublin how could students be incentivised to attend regional institutions?
- The role an expanded apprenticeship model could play and how it might be made more attractive.
- The research metrics should reflect research intensity, a broader range of metrics may be needed. While a different set of metrics might be applied to the IoTs this should not result in a radically different understanding of what research performance means across the two sectors.
- Alternative, more targeted, models for employer contributions. Employers need to be able to engage with higher education at institutional level.
- Importance of clear performance indicators to underpin performance funding.
- Institutional governance and how this may be enhanced possibly through the introduction of supervisory boards.

**Decision:** Members approved the interim report noting there would be minor changes to the draft presented to the Board.

## **6. Review of the Fund for Students with Disabilities**

6.1 The Chair welcomed Ms Rosalind Henry from RSM who made a presentation which focused on the report's 14 recommendation and how the HEA might approach their implementation. Members raised the following issues;

- The proposal that there should be a task force to oversee the introduction of a new model suggested that there were significant problems with the way the fund was currently operating. Ms Henry indicated that this was not the case, she saw no difficulty with the suggestion that the recommendation be amended to setting up an implementation group.
- What was the basis of the recommendation that the fund be increased by €580k? Ms Henry indicated it had regard both to increased demand and the recommendation that part-time students become eligible for the fund.
- Did the consultants look at practice in other countries? Was there a significant difference as regard the disabilities supported? Ms Henry indicated that RSM looked at Australia, US and UK with Ireland broadly similar to the latter with the exception of how part-time students are treated. She indicated that the types of disabilities supported in Ireland was broadly in line although the number of Irish students with a mental disability was growing.
- What was the basis for the recommendation that there be greater transparency? Ms Henry noted this reflected the variety of practices across the sector.

**Decision:** Members agreed to endorse the recommendations and that the report should be submitted to the DES.

## **7. Funding of Athena Swan Pilot**

**Decision:** Members approved the proposed commitment of €510,000 to support the extension of the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU)'s Athena SWAN Charter to Irish higher education institutions for the period 2017-20.

## **8. Proposal to host Board meetings in the HEIs.**

**Decision:** Members approved the proposal that the Board hold at least two meetings per annum in the HEIs. The Executive will develop detailed proposals. The HEA should ensure there was student involvement in meetings at the HEIs.

## **9. Report of Audit Committee**

9.1 The CEO noted it was proposed to undertake an internal audit review on the risk management process in the HEA. It was accordingly proposed to defer preparation of the 2017 report on risk management until after that exercise. This was noted by the Board, it was agreed that the Executive should continue to review its 2016 risk register. It was agreed to upload the 2016 report and register on the Board's sharepoint facility. Concern was expressed over the timing of the reviews towards the end of 2017 and the impact this would have on the work of the Executive. It was agreed to engage with Mazars as regard the timing of these reviews to minimise disruption.

**Decision:** Members approved the report of the Committee and the terms of reference for the internal audit reviews.

## **10. Report of the System Development and Performance Management Committee**

**Decision:** Members approved the report of the Committee and to delegate to the Committee authority to approve the terms of reference for the review of the implementation of the teacher education strategy (the Sahlberg report).

## **11. Schedule of Reserved Functions.**

11.1 Discussion deferred to the next meeting. The Chair will in the interim discuss the schedule with the CEO and Mr. Mellett.

## **12. Any other business**

12.1 It was agreed that the incoming President of USI could attend the next board meeting in an observer capacity.

### **Next Meeting**

27<sup>th</sup> June 2017

Padraic Mellett

6<sup>th</sup> June 2017