

Higher Education Authority**Report of the 392nd Meeting held on 26th June 2018
at Letterkenny Institute of Technology**

- Present¹:
- Dr Bahram Bekhradnia
 - Mr Tony Donohoe
 - Dr Orla Feely
 - Dr Sharon Feeney
 - Mr Michael Horgan
 - Mr Michael Kerrigan
 - Ms Darina Kneafsey
 - Dr Deirdre Lillis
 - Dr Ronan Lyons (via Skype)
 - Dr Jim Mountjoy (via Skype)
 - Dr Sinéad O’Flanagan
 - Mr Pól Ó Móráin
 - Dr Lynn Ramsey
 - Dr John Wall
- Apologies: Dr Judith Eaton
- In attendance:
- Dr Graham Love
 - Ms Síona Cahill
 - Mr Tim Conlon (items 1-12)
 - Dr Gemma Irvine (items 1-12)
 - Mr Stewart Roche (items 1-12)
 - Mr Padraic Mellett (items 1-12)
 - Ms Caitriona Ryan (items 1-10, via Skype)
 - Dr Vivienne Patterson (items 1-12)
 - Ms Sheena Duffy (items 1-12)
 - Mr Peter Brown (items 1-12, via Skype)
 - Ms Nicki O’Connor (item 4 via Skype)
 - Ms Valerie Harvey (items 5, 6 via Skype)
 - Ms Sarah Fitzgerald (items 5, 6 via Skype)
 - Dr Andrée Sursock (item 5 via Skype)

Members at the start of the meeting considered any potential conflict of interest.²

¹ The quorum for HEA Board meetings, six members, was met.

² Dr John Wall is an employee of WIT recused himself from item 7.1, discussion on WIT under the Finance and Governance Committee report. Dr Deirdre Lillis and Dr Sharon Feeney DIT employees for item 5.

The Chair thanked Letterkenny Institute of Technology for agreeing to host the meeting. He congratulated Ms Síona Cahill on her election as President of USI and looked forward to her joining the Board. He noted this was Mr Michael Kerrigan's last meeting as a Board member and thanked him for his contribution to the work of the Board and wished him all the best in the future.

1. Report of 391st Meeting

1.1 The minutes were approved.

2. Matters arising

2.1 Item 6 – Report of the SDPM Committee and landscape reform – It was agreed that the benefits to students arising from institutional mergers would be included in future funding allocation rounds.

2.2 Item 10 – HEA-DES relations. What were the circumstances whereby HEIs deal directly with the DES? Members were advised that the Department dealt directly with HEIs in relation to staff pay and conditions. Members will be kept updated on developments as regard HEA-DES relations.

3. CEO's Report

3.1 Mr Conlon briefed members on the strategic dialogue process. Updated draft compacts will be submitted by 9th July. The Executive will provide the Board with a summary of the key objectives set by each HEIs once the compacts have been finalised. In relation to the metrics, the Executive needs to provide clarification in some instances. The HEIs will upload baseline data in September. The HEA will to provide annually a report on how the system is responding to the targets. The Executive were reminded that they had undertaken to provide the SDPM with the key deliverables within the compacts, in summary form, to the next meeting.

3.2 Members were informed that the term of the current Chair of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning will finish in September 2018. It is proposed to follow the process used by HEAnet in filling this position. The Chair requested the Executive to clarify the role of the Board in relation to this appointment having regard to the appointment of the Forum's last Chair.

3.3 The CEO updated members on senior management appointments. It was agreed that the approval of the Board would be sought for PO level posts in future.

3.4 The Deputy Chair advised members that the risk management training for Audit and Risk Committee members was open to other Board members.

3.5 Ms Duffy briefed members on the current status of the 11 Public-Private Partnership projects underway in the Institutes of Technology. It was agreed to provide a regular update through the CEO's report.

4. HEA Strategic Plan 2018-22

4.1 The CEO introduced this item and outlined how the comments of the Ministers were addressed in the revised plan. Members noted that progress on implementation of the strategy can be measured through the five annual work plans. The following issues were raised;

- Views of the HEA on non-performing HEIs – Members were advised that the contributions of HEIs to the System Performance Framework will be monitored through the strategic dialogue process.
- Degree of specificity in the framework and the need for consistency in reporting – Members were advised that institutions will be requested to provide actual numbers and % changes in their annual reports back to the HEA.

Decision: Members approved the 2018-22 Strategic Plan.

5. Report of the Technological University Advisory Panel³

5.1 The Chair thanked Dr Sursock and her advisory panel colleagues for their report. Dr Sursock noted she has been involved in 12 merger evaluations and found this process to be amongst the most rewarding. The panel met a wide range of staff and stakeholders. The documentation provided by the Executive was very helpful. The panel was satisfied with the thoroughness of the report prepared by Deloitte. Dr Sursock responded to a number of questions raised by members covering research capacity, recommendations for future applications, comparator institutions overseas and the capacity of the consortium to manage the merger.

5.2 Following Dr Sursock's departure the Board considered its role in the process and the challenges facing the new entity. The Board was supportive of the process and considered the issues it would like to convey to the Minister in its letter to accompany the advisory panel's report.

Decision: Members agreed that the Executive would draft a letter, for approval electronically, that will be sent to the Minister outlining issues which the Minister may wish to consider in making his decision. The Executive also agreed to carry out an ex-post review of the process later in the year.

³ Dr Feeney and Dr Lillis absented themselves from this item and did not have access to the papers on this item.

6. The Structure of Teacher Education in Ireland: Review of Progress in Implementing Reform

6.1 Ms Harvey indicated satisfactory progress has been made in implementing the recommendations of the first Sahlberg report. She advised that a key concern of the DES is the need to progress governance issues in a number of the centres. Concern was expressed that the publication of this report may get tied up in the debate on the shortage of teachers. Ms Harvey indicated that the DES was working actively to address the shortage of teachers, the Minister chairs a high-level steering group. Members raised a number of other issues including technological enhanced learning and ISSE response rates in the education centres. Members were informed these were not out of line with other HEIs.

Decision: Members agreed to submit the report to the Minister.

7. Report of Finance and Governance Committee ⁴

7.1 The Chair presented the Committee's report. The Committee agreed to request the Executive to seek further legal advice, from Senior Counsel, in relation to the WIT review. The CEO briefed members on the origins of the WIT review, the terms of reference of this review were agreed with the DES following publication of a PAC report last year. The Chair noted the need for a protocol to handle future such reviews.

7.2 The CEO updated members of the C&AG's special report on UL and IT Sligo. This report is near completion and is likely to be published in the early autumn. The HEA will need to consider what action it takes following publication of this report.

7.3 Ms Duffy updated members on IT Tralee's funding position and advised that the HEA has written to the DES in relation to this matter. The Committee also considered a proposal to review the process for the preparation and return of student record statistics (SRS) by the HEIs.

Decision: Members approved the Committee's report, the process for reviewing SRS returns and noted that it may be necessary to convene a meeting of the Committee to consider the response of the DES to the Senior Counsel's opinion.

8. 2017 Annual Report and Accounts

8.1 Members were informed that the Chair and CEO would sign the HEA 2017 accounts later today. The Board acknowledged the work of Mr Roche and

⁴ Dr Wall absented himself from discussion on the WIT investigation (par. 7.1)

colleagues in getting the accounts finalised. In relation to the highlights of 2017 it was agreed that reference should be made to the appointment of a new CEO. The Board noted a statement in the Governance Statement for 2017 that some expenditure did not comply with procurement guidelines. It was felt that this should have been brought to the attention of the Audit and Risk Committee and ultimately the Board.

Decision: Members approved the 2017 annual report.

9. Memorandum of Understanding with SFI

Decision: Members approved the MoU subject to a small number of changes which the Executive will discuss with SFI.

10. HEA 2018 Work-plan – mid year

10.1 The CEO introduced the mid-year report noting that 78.5% of actions were on target. The Executive provided further elaboration for a number of the amber/red items. Members noted that some of the actions behind schedule were due to factors outside the control of the Executive. Dr Irvine advised members that work was underway on the development of a national digital transformation strategy. It was accordingly proposed to defer the Stakeholder Forum on this topic (action 2.1) to February 2019.

Decision: Members agreed the latter proposal and noted the mid-year report.

11. Report of Gender Equality Taskforce

11.1 Dr Irvine briefed members on the work of the Taskforce. Its report is expected to be published at the end of July 2018. She noted that Ireland, in line with most other countries, faced structural issues which need to be addressed if gender equality is to be achieved. The Taskforce is likely to recommend a Centre of Excellence for Gender Equality be established within the HEA. The Centre will ensure sustainable acceleration towards gender equality in the HEIs, collate the HEIs gender equality statistics, review HEI gender equality plans and advise on HEI gender equality actions under the agreed compacts. She suggested over time the remit of the Centre could, with modest additional resources, be widened to include the other equality grounds. She briefed members on developments relating to the Athena SWAN initiative and advised that the Taskforce was likely to recommend that the HEA have responsibility for determining the optimal timing and requirements of Athena SWAN certification in relation to eligibility for research funding and if, and when a sanction should be applied.

11.2 Members were advised HEIs will be required to provide mandatory reporting on some of the Taskforce recommendations, which will feed into the strategic dialogue process. She confirmed that the Taskforce is focusing on staff gender equality, however the remit of the Centre proposed for the HEA could include student gender equality.

12. Follow-up actions

12.1 Discussion on this item was deferred to the next meeting. The Chair advised Members that he met the CEO and Mr Mellett to review the list and advised that progress is being made in finalising the list.

13. Any other business

13.1 Dr Irvine presented an overview of activity nationally in relation to reviewing Ireland's research infrastructure. In particular she focused on the publishing market and open access. She noted the role HEA funding plays in underpinning research activity in the HEIs. During the recession, funding for research in Ireland was prioritised within particular areas of strength and the development of research centres with specialist expertise. She noted that it is timely now, as we come out of a period of austerity, to consider investing in the wider research ecosystem to ensure it is fit for purpose and effective. There are a number of national initiatives currently taking a closer look at the various activities involved in publishing and making research outputs open access including:

- HRB Open Research Publishing Platform
- National Open Research Forum (NORF)
- Irish Research e-Library (IREL) review
- Bibliometric Analysis Tools review

She agreed to provide future updates on these developments through the CEO's report.

14. Members only session

14.1 Good Practice

The Chair informed the Board that he had met with the Chief Executive to discuss outstanding issues and also the relationship with the Board. The Chair indicated that 'Good Practice' was the key to a strong and impactful relationship between the Board and the Executive.

Given that the current Board was the first selected through the Public Appointments Service and that the Chair was the first former Leader of a higher

education institution to be appointed Chair, the Board possessed a range of skills and backgrounds that should be of great use to the Executive. Each individual on the Board was selected for a very specific skill or specific experience.

It was agreed that consideration be given to using short-life Task Forces from within the Board to assist on particular issues facing the HEA, such as: Use of IT, Data Collection, Student Numbers etc.

14.2 Position Papers

It was agreed that position papers would be prepared for consideration by the Board on Third level Funding and on University Rankings.

14.3 Terms of Reference of Board

It was agreed to review the Terms of Reference of the Board at the next meeting.

The Chief Executive left the meeting at this point.

14.4 Recent Selection Process

The Board wished to confirm that each of the unsuccessful internal candidates had received feedback and advice on their applications.

It was agreed to suggest that a Staff Satisfaction Survey be undertaken as part of the review of HR practice and policy.

Next Meeting

25th September, UCD

Padraic Mellett

25th July 2018.