

**Higher Education Authority**  
**Report of Meeting of the Board of the HEA held on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

**Present:**

- Dr Niall Connors, Chairperson (agenda items 1-10)
- Mr Dermot McCarthy (agenda items 1-10)
- Dr Fiona Killard-Lynch via Ms Teams (agenda items 1-10)
- Dr Rory O’Sullivan (agenda items 1-10)
- Dr Rosemary Day (agenda items 1-10)
- Ms Lianne Patterson via MS Teams (agenda items 1-10)
- Ms Nessa McEniff (agenda items 4-10)
- Ms Paula Fyans (agenda items 5-10)
- Professor Anne Scott via MS Teams (agenda items 1-10)
- Mr Chris Clifford via MS Teams (agenda items 4-10)

**Apologies:** Professor Mark Rogers

**In attendance:**

- Dr Alan Wall (agenda items 1-10.1)
- Ms Orla Nugent (agenda items 1-9)
- Mr Tim Conlon (agenda items 1-9)
- Ms Caitriona Ryan (agenda items 1-9)
- Dr Vivienne Patterson (agenda items 1-9)
- Ms Pearl Cunningham (agenda items 1-9)
- Ms Orla Christle (agenda items 1-9)
- Dr Louise Callinan (agenda items 1-9)
- Mr Maurice Moynihan (agenda item 8)
- Mr Trevor Purtill (agenda items 1-9)
- Ms Éilis Noonan (agenda items 1-9)

**Conflicts of Interest**

No conflicts of interest were disclosed.

**Quorum**

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

**1. Report of meeting held 17th December**

**Decision:** The Report of the December Board meeting was approved.

## **2. Matters arising**

### *2.1 Research Paper*

It was confirmed that the Executive have prepared a paper on the HEA's role in Research for discussion by the Board at the Away Day.

## **3. Memo 3/25 Board Secretary**

The CEO presented this item, which recommended the appointment of Mr Trevor Purtill as Board Secretary. Mr Purtill recently took up his post as Head of Corporate Affairs in the HEA.

**Decision:** The Board approved the appointment of Mr Trevor Purtill as Board Secretary.

## **4. HEA Bank Mandates**

Ms Cunningham presented this item. The Board were requested to approve several resolutions required by the HEA bank to effect updates to the operation of banking services due to personnel changes as set out in Memo 4/25 and Memo 5/25.

**Decision:** The Board approved these resolutions.

## **5. Memo 6/25 Revised 2025 Board Meeting Dates & Agenda Outline for 2025**

Ms Noonan presented this item. The Board were requested to approve a revised date of 2<sup>nd</sup> December for the 2025 Board Meeting schedule.

**Decision:** The Board approved this revised date.

The Board noted the Outline of Agenda items for 2025.

## **6. Memo 7/25 Executive Report**

Members raised the following queries:

- Where can details of 2024 grant income versus original budget and previous year be found? It was clarified that this information can be found in the Management Accounts in the Supporting Folder.

The Board noted the Executive Report.

## **7. Corporate Risk Register**

The Board noted the Corporate Risk Register.

## **8. Presentation from HEA Legal on HEA Act 2022**

Mr. Moynihan presented an overview of the HEA Act 2022 and the available powers therein, with specific reference to funding and oversight powers under SS37-42 and under SS64-68 respectively. Mr Moynihan also raised the matter of the ongoing review of the HEA Act at the request of DFHERIS, and reminded Members they are welcome to submit any suggestions as part of this process.

Members raised the following questions/points for consideration:

- While the review of the HEA's powers under the Act understandably focuses on the issues and problems encountered thus far, it should also take account of what is working well. Mr Moynihan confirmed that the Executive are examining the entire Act.
- How does the Act relate to the performance agreements (PAs) with HEIs? There are several sections in the Act governing the PAs, and provides for review and consistent engagement between the HEA and HEIs on these agreements.
- It was noted that reviews of legislation often incorporate external factors as well as the HEA's views, and that DFHERIS will consult broadly on any development of this legislation.

Members thanked Mr Moynihan for the presentation.

## **9. Results of Board Self-Evaluation**

The Chair led a preliminary discussion on the results of the Board Self-Evaluation conducted in December 2024. Members felt that while some of the questions as set out in the template provided in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies had posed challenges due to their generic nature, it had been a valuable process. The Board felt that the feedback should be analysed to determine learnings and outcomes for the more effective performance of the Board.

The Chair asked the Executive for their views on completing the survey, and the Executive confirmed they also found it a worthwhile process.

It was decided that time will be dedicated to further discussion at the Board Away Day in February.

## **10. AOB**

### *10.1 HEA Culture Review*

Forvis Mazars are carrying out the HEA Culture review commencing in January. Ms Nugent updated the Board that Forvis Mazars will be holding in person sessions with the Board, Senior Management Team and staff members respectively, in addition to the completion of a staff survey. The session with the Board will focus on exploring the HEA's future target culture. The Board was supportive of this proposal and the Executive will arrange a suitable date.

#### **10.2** *Communication to Minister*

Dr Day enquired as to whether an invitation will be sent to the newly appointed Minister for FHERIS, and it was confirmed that one will issue as soon as possible. It was requested that the communication with the Minister should reference the need for a permanent Chair to be appointed to the HEA Board.

### **11. Members Only Session**

**Next Meeting:** The date of the next meeting was agreed as Tuesday 25th March 2025.

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Chairperson

Date