

Higher Education Authority

Report of Meeting of the Board of the HEA held on 27th of June 2023

- Present:
- Mr Tony Donohoe (agenda items 1-18)
 - Dr Judith Eaton (agenda items 1-18)
 - Mr Michael Horgan, Chairperson (agenda items 1-18)
 - Ms Darina Kneafsey (agenda items 1-18)
 - Dr Sinéad O’Flanagan (agenda items 1-18)
 - Mr Pól Ó Móráin (agenda items 1-18)
 - Dr John Wall (agenda items 1-18)
 - Dr Sharon Feeney (agenda items 1-18)
 - Mx Beth O Reilly (agenda items 1-18)
- In attendance:
- Professor Daniel Carey, IRC Chair (agenda items 1-18)
 - Professor Maria Clarke, SETL Committee Chair (agenda items 1-18)
 - Mr Chris Clifford, incoming USI President (agenda items 1-17)

 - Dr Alan Wall (agenda items 1-18.1)
 - Ms Orla Nugent (agenda items 1-17)
 - Mr Padraic Mellett (agenda items 1-17)
 - Mr Tim Conlon (agenda items 1-17)
 - Ms Caitriona Ryan (agenda items 1-17)
 - Dr Vivienne Patterson (agenda items 1-17)
 - Dr Louise Callinan (agenda items 1-17)
 - Ms. Pearl Cunningham (agenda items 1-17)
 - Ms Sheena Duffy (agenda items 1-17)
 - Ms Eilis Noonan (agenda items 1-17)
 - Dr Victoria Brownlee (agenda item 7, 13)
 - Ms Teresa Gallagher (agenda items 7, 13)
 - Ms Anne Hession (agenda item 8)
 - Dr Deirdre Quinn (agenda item 12)
 - Dr Richard Brophy (agenda item 12)

Mr John Randall (agenda item 12)

Ms Maura O'Shea (agenda item 14)

Conflicts of Interest

The Chair reminded all Board members of potential conflicts of interest and asked members to highlight any items that may require attention. None were raised.

Quorum

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

Opening Remarks

The Chair thanked the President and staff of UCC for hosting the Board Meeting and expressed thanks on behalf of the Board to the President and staff of MTU for their hospitality during the Board's visit the previous day.

The Chair noted that this was Beth O'Reilly, outgoing USI President's last meeting as a HEA Board Member. The Chair, Board and Executive thanked Beth for their very useful contributions to the Board, and wished them every success for the future. The Chair also welcomed the incoming USI President, Mr Chris Clifford, to his first meeting of the HEA.

1. Report of previous meeting

1.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 25th April were agreed.

2. Matters arising

2.1 No matters were raised.

3. Report of the Finance Committee 30th of May

Dr. O'Flanagan presented this report.

3.1 Report on 2023 Budget and Accountability Meetings

The Committee noted the report on the 2023 Budget and Accountability Meetings with the Higher Education Institutions. The Committee commended the report and acknowledged the significant effort undertaken by the Executive to prepare same.

The Report highlighted that the Higher Education Authority is responsible for ensuring that its core funded institutions plan and manage their activities in a way which secures their sustainability and financial viability. This contributes to the success of students, researchers, the higher education system and Ireland's wider society and economy. The submission and review of HEIs annual budgets and financial projections, regular reports and audited financial statements together with the annual budget and accountability meetings with senior HEI executives, are key components of the HEA's financial oversight of these institutions. These mechanisms assist the HEA in discharging its responsibilities for reporting and monitoring as set out in Circular 13/2014 Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds and ensuring accountability by institutions as set out in the Higher Education Authority Act, 2022. In addition, institutions are required to submit signed Annual Oversight Agreements and Annual Governance Statements.

The Board was informed that meetings were held with 18 institutions during March and April and the outputs of these meetings together with details of their financial projections are set out in the Report. These meetings provide a valuable opportunity to engage with the institutions on financial and accountability matters as well as challenges and risks facing the sector. This Report provides details on the main issues arising across the sector, key institutional risks, a summary of their financial projections together with individual dashboards for each institution. In overall terms, institutions reported healthy financial performance for 2021/22, as measured by income and expenditure, with aggregate surpluses of €68.1m. Lower costs due to delays in expenditure, particularly staff recruitment and maintenance works is the main contributory factor. Aggregate results forecast for 2022/23 are deficits of €30.7m and these are projected to reduce to aggregate deficits of €14.6m in 2024/25. It should be noted that some of the larger deficits are considered “planned” deficits and can be met by the accumulated reserves held by the respective institutions. Three universities, University of Galway, TCD and UL are forecasting deficits for 2022/2023.

The University of Galway has a planned deficit of €14m due to delays incurring certain expenditure during the pandemic and these delays were further exacerbated due to their cyberattack. The University has reserves to meet this deficit. TCD are projecting an operating deficit of €13m for 2022/23 and UL are forecasting a deficit of €0.3m. TCD holds c.€250m in endowment/investment assets but no account has been taken for investment gains/losses on these assets in the forecast. The University of Galway has provided formal notification to the HEA of their deficit as required by S37 Universities Act and TCD is expected to provide their formal notification in early June following their Finance Committee meeting. MIC is projecting a deficit of €3.3m for 2022/23 however this is due to a large programme of minor works which is planned to be met from MIC’s accumulated reserves.

DKIT are not expecting to return to surplus until 2024/25. They are actively working through the action items set out in the Sustainability Plan and regular updates are provided to the HEA Executive. The key action however relates to their ability to reduce their staff costs and cumulative savings of €2.25m in the period to 2024/25 have been included in their projections.

DFHERIS are engaging directly with DKIT and MTU to gather information in order for them to present a case to DPER regarding a staff redundancy/early retirement package.

ATU, TU Dublin and TUS are forecasting deficits of €3.2m, €2.8m and €2.1m respectively for 2022/2023.

The main reasons cited are:

- underfunding of back dated pay awards,
- inflationary pressure on non-pay costs particularly energy
- additional expenditure required to improve IT security measures
- necessity for HEIs to fund more assets from their own resources.

Formal notifications of deficits as required under S.20 of the Technological Universities Act have been requested. This has been provided by TUS and the remainder are being followed up. IADT and RIA are forecasting smaller deficits of €0.3m and €0.2m respectively.

All institutions have confirmed that they have sufficient cash resources to meet their liabilities in full up until December 2024. However, DKIT are projecting cash holdings becoming tight in Aug/Sept 2024.

DKIT have confirmed that cashflow projections are updated regularly and reported to their Finance and Risk committee.

Decision: Members noted the Report on 2023 Budget and Accountability Meetings.

3.2 2024 Estimates Submission

The Committee recommended approval of the HEA’s 2024 Estimates Submission to the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, noting that these Estimates are indicative and will be adjusted by the Executive as further clarifications are received prior to final submission.

Decision: Members approved the 2024 Estimates Submission.

33 Innovation & Transformation Fund

The Committee recommended approval of the proposed final balancing payments in respect of projects funded under the Innovation and Transformation Fund since it was launched in 2018. All final project reports have been received, with final expenditure of c.€22m, resulting in an overall underspend of €1.25m. Similar to other unspent balances in the 2023 Recurrent Grant, it is proposed to utilise the unspent Innovation and Transformation Fund balance towards ‘Free Fees’ instalment at year-end.

Decision: Members approved the proposed final balancing payments in respect of projects funded under the Innovation and Transformation Fund and the proposal to allocate unspent balances towards free fees.

3.4 Mental Health & Student Wellbeing

The Committee recommend approval of the draft 2022 Student Supports for Mental Health and Wellbeing Funding Analysis Report.

Table 1 - Total Allocations for 2022				
	€2m Core Funding	€3m Additional	Ukrainian Students (USFI)	Total
Supports for Student Mental Health	€ 1,962,000.00	€ 2,750,000.00	€ 835,000.00	€ 5,547,000.00
National Projects		€ 250,000.00	€ 65,000.00	€ 315,000.00
Monitoring and Oversight	€ 38,000.00			€ 38,000.00
TOTAL	€ 2,000,000.00	€ 3,000,000.00	€ 900,000.00	€ 5,900,000.00

Decision: Members approved the Report.

The Committee recommended approval of the allocations of Student Supports for Student Mental Health and Wellbeing 2023 and for the implementation of the National Framework for Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention in respect of €5 million in the B11 subhead consisting of €2 million in 2023 core funding and €3 million of additional funding targeted to alleviate the cost-of-living crisis.

Decision: Members approved the 2023 allocations.

The Committee recommended approval of the allocations in respect of €65,000 in the B04 subhead, which is the remainder of €900,000 issued by DFHERIS in 2022 for the support of Ukrainian students residing in Ireland under a Section 60 Temporary Protection Order, and who are registered in HEIs for the academic year 2022-23 and the implementation of the National Framework for Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention.

Decision: Members approved the allocations.

Members noted the Committee's Report.

4. Report of the Audit & Risk Committee

Ms Kneafsey presented this report.

4.1 Risk Management

The Committee received a report on Risk Management in the HEA. The HEA's Sectional and Corporate Risk Registers have been updated. Overall, there was an increase of 3 risks on the Corporate Register and an increase of 5 risks on the Sectional Registers. The Risk Management Framework has been updated. A guide to assessing the impact of risks was also added in Appendix 4. There were no changes to the Risk Appetite Statement. A Chief Risk Officer has been appointed, and it is proposed to have Risk Champions in each section who will meet quarterly.

Decision: Members approved the revised Risk Management Framework and agreed to consider specific risks at future meetings as recommended in the annual governance review by Governance Ireland.

4.2 IA Report Springboard

The Committee considered the Internal Audit Report into the GDPR compliance of Springboard. Recommendations were made around management of third parties, consistency of agreements and enhanced documentation. These will be addressed without delay by the Executive.

4.0.3 ARC Annual Report

References to legislation and meeting attendance have been added to the Report considered at the Committee's previous meeting. The Committee recommended the report for approval to the Board.

Decision: Members approved the ARC Annual Report.

Members noted the Committee's report.

5. Report of the Irish Research Council 26th May

5.0.1 Professor Carey presented this report.

5.0.2 The Committee discussed the latest developments regarding the formation of the new Research agency. The CEO Designate of the Agency was named as Professor Phillip Nolan. A wider public consultation on how the new agency will operate will be managed by the CEO Designate. The importance of the involvement of both IRC and SFI in managing the public consultation process was emphasised by Council Members. The Department has confirmed that the board of the new agency will be appointed via the PAS process. The Department indicated that it has engaged with PAS on arrangements to commence the process in advance of the enactment of the legislation.

A question was raised as to the requirement for gender balance in nominations for the IRC's Researcher of the Year Award. It was confirmed that the gender categories for the awards have been made more inclusive to ensure consistency with the IRC's Gender Strategy. It was clarified that nominations can be made in a single gender category subject to a rationale being provided by the nominating institutions.

It was noted that Peter Brown will be returning from leave, resuming his post as IRC Director. The Board thanked Louise Callinan for her outstanding work as Director of the IRC. Dr Callinan thanked the Board and Professor Carey in particular for their support.

Members noted the Committee's Report.

6. Report of the Student Engagement and Teaching & Learning Committee 8th June – verbal update from Committee Chair

6.0.1 Professor Clarke gave a verbal update of the Committee's last meeting.

The first meeting of the Student Engagement and Teaching & Learning Committee was held on the 8th of June. The Committee received presentations from various sections of the HEA. The Committee engaged in a comprehensive discussion on the broader remit, considering various perspectives and potential areas of focus. Clarifications regarding the terms of reference (ToRs) were sought and addressed by the Chair and Committee members. It was agreed to include a minimum of four student representatives on the Committee to ensure greater student input and representation. The next Committee meeting was proposed to be strategic in nature.

An update was also provided on the new SATLE funding call and Delta Award review, highlighting a celebration event scheduled for the first quarter of 2024. The Board was also informed of the award to the NFTL (now SETL) of a Laurate of the esteem UNESCO King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa prize for the use of ICT in Education. The awards ceremony is to be held in Paris in September, which includes a gold medal and a prize of 25k.

The draft Committee Terms of Reference were brought to the Board for approval.

The following issues were raised;

- There was a discussion of the use of the word "Authority" to refer to the HEA Board in the Terms of Reference. It was decided that for consistency this be changed to "Board" throughout the document.

The Chair confirmed that the minutes of this meeting would be submitted to the September Board meeting for review and approval, along with the revised Terms of Reference.

Members noted the Committee Chair's update.

7. Memorandum B 30/23 – Approval of Performance Funding Allocations

7.1 Mr Conlon presented this report. Members were requested to consider the recommendations of the assessment panel in respect of allocations of performance funding for impact in 2023 and to agree recommendations on the allocation of €5,604,675 in performance funding to the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. In addition, Members were presented with a report on the close out of Performance Funding awarded in 2019, including the reallocation of a final balance of €604,675 to Performance Funding 2023 (as agreed with DFHERIS).

All final financial and narrative reports for PF2019 were reviewed by the Executive against original project plans and budgets, and against any modifications approved during the project. Feedback for the 14 completed projects was issued to HEI presidents and project leads on 26th May 2023. Feedback focused on the main strengths and outcomes of the projects, along with any challenges or learnings, as demonstrated in the final reports.

For Performance Funding 2023, the Government has allocated €5m for award to HEIs in recognition of positive performance and contribution to national policy objectives in 2023. In addition, as noted above, DFHERIS have approved the reprofiling of the balance of 2019 Performance Funding – €604,675 to be returned to the HEA by 19 June 2023 – for Performance Funding in 2023. This brings the total balance of funding for 2023 to €5,604,675.

A consensus meeting was convened with the assessment panel on 1st June 2023 to discuss the case studies and to agree the overall ranking of the case studies and recommendations on performance funding awards. During the consensus meeting, the panel discussed the case studies and agreed on a final average score and ranking for each. The panel proposed to award the €5m allocated in 2023 in awards of €1m to the top five ranking case studies. In respect of the €604,675 balance remaining from Performance Funding 2019, they proposed that this funding be divided equally between the two highest ranking case studies, bringing those two awards to c. €1.3m.

HEI	Impact Assessment Case Study Title	Proposed Allocation
UL	Greentown: Reducing the influence of criminal networks over children and families	€1,302,337.29
UG	The Active* Consent programme: Leading on sectoral culture change.	€1,302,337.29
SETU	SETU & An Cosán: Using the power of community education to create transformative higher education pathways for social inclusion and sustainable development	€1,000,000
TU Dublin	TU Dublin: A Beacon for Sustainability	€1,000,000
UCC	Barr na gCnoc: University Assisted Community Schools Pilot Initiative	€1,000,000
Total		€5,604,674.58

The following queries were raised:

- Members noted that successful institutions should be encouraged to acknowledge the HEA and Performance Funding in all publicity and communications relating to the project, e.g., website, events, publications.
- There was a discussion on how the exemplary contribution and achievement of the institutions who are successful in Performance Funding could be further highlighted and celebrated, for example through an awards ceremony.

Decision: Members approved the recommended allocations in respect of performance funding for impact in 2023 and the recommendations on the allocation of €5,604,675 in performance funding to the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

8. Memorandum B31/23 Annual Governance Statements

8.1 Ms Hession presented this Memo. Members were asked to consider the Report on the 2021/22 Annual Governance Statements. The review of the Annual Governance Statements for Higher Education Institutions 2021/22 was undertaken by the HEA and Mazars provided a quality assurance role. Mazars confirmed that the review methodology applied by the Executive was robust. The review has noted areas of good compliance and control were reported by HEIs, including compliance with legislation and effectiveness of Systems of Internal Controls, and identified areas for improvement, particularly in ICT security.

Possible topics for thematic reviews were identified, including in the areas of Procurement, Protected Disclosures, and conflict of interest matters.

8.2 The following queries were raised:

- It was noted that in some cases a response citing ‘reasonable assurance’ was provided by HEIs. The Executive confirmed that HEIs taking this position in respect of compliance will be asked for confirmation that assurances are supported by a clear audit trail.
- It was requested that individual institutions be named in the report, as had been past practice. The Executive confirmed that this can be amended and the document recirculated.
- Governance can sometimes fall within the brief of College Secretariat, and this could lead to a disconnect between the Secretariat and Governing Body in terms of obligations. The Executive will engage with relevant stakeholders within HEIs regarding their Institution’s AGS submission.
- Importance of identifying thematic issues across the sector was emphasised and this is a progression from the Red-Amber-Green matrix previously used.
- The Executive confirmed that HEA will be asking one HEI to resubmit its statement.
- The HEA is working with the sector on Cybersecurity, incident response plans and Business Continuity Planning via an ICT network as well as the DPO network.

Decision: Members approved the proposed approach set out in this Memo, noting that a revised Report with HEI names included will be recirculated to the Board.

9. Memorandum B32/23- Office Accommodation Update- Lease of an Additional Floor in 3 Shelbourne Buildings

9.1 The Board was requested to approve the lease of additional office space and to amend the terms of the current leases. The Board was also asked to agree that approval for the procurement of a programme of minor capital works may be provided electronically, if necessary, to enable works commence at the earliest possible opportunity.

Decision: The Board approved the lease of additional office space and amending the terms of the current leases, as well as the proposed approach set out in this Memorandum.

10. Memorandum B33/23 Approval of Model Superannuation Scheme – UCD

10.1 The Board was requested to approve the Statutory Instrument moving UCD’s Pension Scheme from an administrative to a statutory basis. The Minister for Further & Higher Education, Research,

Innovation & Science and the Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform have given their consent to the scheme.

Following the enactment of the Single Pension Scheme in 2012 the Department of Public Expenditure consolidated the rules of the model scheme into a new regulation, Rules for Pre-Existing Public Service Pension Scheme Members Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 582 of 2014). These regulations form the basis of the UCD scheme, subject to a number of minor amendments as set out in the Statutory Instrument before the Board.

10.2 The following query was raised:

- There will be three other similar institutional schemes, will there be a consistent approach by the Departments? As the Scheme is set out in the Circular and changes agreed at central level, it is expected that the Schemes to follow should be similar.

Decision: The Board approved the Statutory Instrument.

11. Memorandum B34/23 Pension Appeals determinations

11.1 The Board was requested to note two determinations made by the CEO on pension appeals submitted by two staff members in TCD. These appeals are provided for in Section 5 of the Fifth Schedule of the Universities Act 1997.

Decision: Members noted this Memorandum.

12. Memorandum B 35/23 Development of a new HEA Corporate Strategy

12.1 The Corporate Strategic Plan aims to bring together the organisation's objectives to provide medium to long-term strategic direction, underpinned by the HEA's remit as set out in the functions and objectives of the Higher Education Authority Act (2022), and in other relevant national policies and frameworks.

Mr John Randall, appointed to the role of external consultant, was given a brief introduction. Dr Randall is an Independent Higher Education consultant with experience from many professional bodies and was the first CEO of a quality assurance agency for UK government.

An update on work completed in the development process was delivered by the Executive. Information on the outcome of a meeting between Mr Randall, SMT and the 'Plan Leads' was provided, including a high-level overview of the main strategic objectives that SMT would like to focus on. HEA sections and SMT have been provided with a template, mapping the responsibilities of each section in line with the functions and objectives of the HEA as set out in the HEA Act 2022. Using the template, an appointed contact from each section/unit will work collaboratively within their section to draft objectives, milestones and KPIs for the Plan's duration.

Mr Randall's briefing included a request for strategic input from Board members on how the HEA can best work to complete its vision and set targets for its mission over the duration of the next Plan

The briefing delivered covered the following points:

- The Corporate Strategic Plan should set out strategic objectives for how the HEA will work over the medium to long term to support, develop, fund, and regulate Higher Education and Research in Ireland. Strategic partnerships need to be taken into account-such as those with Solas, QQI and the new research agency once established.
- The new Act sets out explicitly powers that had previously been implicit powers, including powers of intervention. It was advised that the Corporate Strategic Plan can be used to set out timelines for the development of processes and procedures for the implementation of HEA regulatory powers, taking risk mitigation into account.
- Institutions may have an expectation of how the HEA will be using the powers. It was suggested this will be best explained through the Corporate Plan.
- It was suggested that legal advice should be sought when developing the policy for application of these powers.
- Annual Plans may be used to set out timescales for designation processes and policies to be developed.
- The development of policies should be informed by extensive experience, data and rich bodies of information such as student feedback.
- External consultation on the development of the CSP will take place, with the HEA seeking written submissions for review from a list of invited stakeholders
- An annual plan should follow the Corporate Strategic Plan, outlining how resources will be allocated, both financial and human, and should include:
 1. The broad strategy that Corporate Strategic Plan is concerned with, particularly the putting into place systems necessary to implement main provisions of the Act, that are new regulatory powers.
 2. Quantitative, measurable KPIs. Metrics for some KPIs will be expanded in the annual plan.
 3. Performance measures- continuing and routine functions, response rates on surveys, advice to be provided to minister re: disposal of land.
 4. How the Corporate Strategic Plan & annual operating plan will work considering that beneath these there will be work plans for the individual sections, setting targets for team leaders through routine performance appraisals.
 5. How the Development pillar, which is going to contain key policy areas for the development of the HE system and individual institutions, will be resourced given that it forms a crucial part of overall system development and that there is a continuous need for improvement.

12.2 The following issues were raised:

- It was suggested that a strategy day will be arranged for Members with Mr Randall in August when the draft plan is more advanced.

- Members asked how stakeholders will be contacted when being invited to provide submissions. It was confirmed stakeholders will receive a written invitation to submit their contributions informing the development of the Plan.
- The Board previously agreed that 'Corporate' and 'Strategic' plan should be regarded as the same, this may need to be reviewed later.
- Members noted that the Plan will be of benefit to the new Board once appointed, as a starting point.
- Clarity around the extent to which and when the HEA will use of regulatory powers.
- Caution was advised around the use of metrics in the Corporate Strategic Plan as overuse can render KPIs meaningless. Specific KPIs are to be layered into the annual plan and into team and individual performance setting mechanisms.
- It was suggested that in the absence of a Departmental Strategy, the Programme for Government and Action Plans for Sectors for DFHERIS should be taken into account. An awareness of historical and recurring touchpoints would also be beneficial during the development process.
- Comments on strategic partnerships to be fleshed out by Executive, this is an important opportunity. Acknowledging HEA has responsibility to make the partnerships work.
- The new Act puts student front and centre. The pillars of the mission should recognise that and it might also be included in the vision statement. Lessons might be learnt from the experience in England and Wales.

Decision: The Board noted Dr Randall's presentation. An expanded list of stakeholders will be circulated to the Board, and a session will be arranged on the Strategic Plan for Members in August. The draft Plan will be brought to the September Board Meeting for consideration.

13. Memorandum B 36/23a – TUTF Funding

13.1 Dr Brownlee presented these Memos.

Members were provided with an overview of the rationale for, and approach to, the Technological University Transformation Fund (TUTF) administrative extension process, as well as an update on the balance of funding by institution in the context of their TUTF allocations over the three years of the fund.

In Year 1 of the TUTF a total of €34.32m was allocated to technological university consortia, technological universities, and institutes of technology. An additional €25.68m, was allocated in the second year of the Fund, and the final year of the TUTF saw a total of €30m dispersed to institutions, bringing the total allocation over the three years of the Fund to €90m.

Institutions were asked to complete a workplan and budget on the basis of their Year 3 TUTF allocations. Analysis and review of these documents by the Executive suggested that institutions would be unlikely to complete their TUTF projects by the end date of the fund (31 August 2023). Delays in recruitment and procurement of systems were cited by institutions as common reasons for delay. The Executive determined that TUTF recipients would benefit from additional time to conclude TUTF activities. A decision was taken to develop a no-cost administrative extension process of up to twelve

months (1 September 2023 – 31 August 2024) to enable institutions to close out key activities and expend remaining balances. A Policy has been developed in this regard. The Executive expects to conclude its review of TUTF extension applications in June and HEIs are expected to be formally notified of the outcome of their requests in July. This notification will take the form of a letter to Presidents which will set down the duration of the extension (up to maximum of 12 months, 31 August 2024) and indicate the terms and conditions of funding, including reporting requirements. Institutions in receipt of an extension will be required to adhere to the current TUTF reporting guidelines.

Decision: Member's approved the approach set out in this Memo.

Memorandum B 36/23b – ERDF – TU RISE Funding

13.2 Members were requested to approve the approach to the ERDF-funded TU RISE scheme, as set out in the draft call document, which details the scope of the scheme and the application and selection process. TU RISE will make €83m in funding available over four years (2023-2027) via two regional programmes. Funding of €63m is available under the Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme, and funding of €20m is available under the Northern and Western Regional Programme. TU RISE will be operated by the HEA as a managed, non-competitive fund with the aim of driving and enhancing research capacity and regional engagements across the sector, and the call is expected to launch in the coming weeks.

Decision: The Board approved the approach set out in this Memo.

14. Memorandum B37/23- HEA Branding

14.1 Board members were requested to approve the proposal to develop a new corporate logo and branding guidelines for the HEA.

The HEA is seeking to develop a new logo and identity to reflect its enhanced role and in recognition of its position as a large statutory agency accountable for exchequer funding of €2bn per annum. In addition, the HEA plans to redesign its website next year, so it is timely to carry out this rebranding.

14.2 The following issues were raised:

- Members emphasised the importance of consistency of the HEA's branding in various aspects of the organisation. Particularly important that in terms of any funding received through the HEA, the HEA's logo and branding be displayed.
- In terms of the redevelopment of the HEA website, this will need careful planning, with a specific focus on integrating standalone websites and consolidating them under the main domain, such as Erasmus.
- The Board emphasised the significance of ensuring visibility and accessibility on the website to meet statutory requirements and universal design principles.
- The implementation of a unified house style across all communication channels and materials was discussed to maintain consistency and reinforce the organisation's brand identity.

Decision: Members noted this Memorandum.

15. Memorandum B38/23- Governance Ireland Report- Board and Committee Effectiveness Evaluation and Board Feedback Survey Update

15.1 The Board was requested to note the report from Governance Ireland regarding the Board and Committees Effectiveness review conducted during March & April 2023. The Board was also requested to note an update on the Board Feedback Survey conducted in January 2023.

Members discussed the recommendations from the Governance Ireland Report, and emphasised the need for continuity of Board membership during this time. The report noted the risk of a new Board coming in *de novo* while the Strategic Plan was being prepared and while the HEA established its new powers under the legislation. This is complicated by Section 16 of the HEA Act, which states that current members cannot exceed 8 years.

It was agreed that the Chair should write to the Department and flag this concern, and investigate options for the continuity of some or all Board Members, so that new appointments could be more staggered over the next 12 months, allowing for a more structured transition to new Members.

15.2 There was discussion about the recommendation in the report that key stakeholder messages be brought to the Board's attention. It was noted that the Executive provides the Board with updates from stakeholders through its regular reporting to the Board and committees. The report on annual budget and accountability meetings as well as feedback from strategic dialogue meetings provide valuable insights on key messages from the higher education institutions.

Decision: Members noted the report from Governance Ireland and the response to the Board survey on 2023 priorities. The Chair will raise the risk of lack of Board continuity with DFHERIS.

16. Memorandum B 39/23 – Update on legal strategy arising from Springboard Data Breach

The Board was requested to note the legal strategy recommended by external legal counsel, Eversheds, on the litigation arising from the breach of personal data in September 2022 on the Springboard Employer's Interface.

Decision: The Board noted the contents of this Memorandum.

17. Executive Report – Memorandum B40/23 attached

The following issues were raised:

- **ESF:** The Board was informed that Access has written to the Department again concerning ESF and PATH 2. The Access Policy Unit have advised the Managing Authority that it is not possible to implement PATH 2 as part of ESF for the 23/24 academic year at this late stage, given the delays from DFHERIS in putting in place appropriate SLAs (Service Level Agreements) and DSAs (Data Sharing Agreements). The Board expressed its support for this approach.
- **Path Update:** Ms Ryan provided an update on Path 4 Phase 2 and stated that it is expected to launch this Thursday 29th June.
- **Bologna Follow-Up Group:** Members queried the Bologna Follow-Up Group for Learning & Teaching and its connection to the Committee. It was clarified that the Group's report does not directly feed into the Student Engagement and Teaching & Learning Committee's work. Dr Lynn Ramsey had been the Group's Co-Chair and Mr Tim Conlon has now been appointed to this role by DFHERIS.

- **Equality and Diversity Subgroup:** The Board discussed the Equality and Diversity Subgroup, which is chaired by the HEA and consists of representatives from various EDI sections in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). It was noted that the subgroup meets twice a year.
- **SETL committee:** The first meeting of the SETL Committee took place on the 15th of June. The agenda for the meeting included an overview of the remit of the Committee along with presentations from HEA sections including EDI, Access Policy and the National Forum for Teaching & Learning.

Members noted the Executive Report.

18. Members Only session

No substantial items were discussed.

Next Meeting: The date of the next meeting was agreed as Tuesday 19th September.

Chairperson Date