

Higher Education Authority
Report of Meeting of the Board of the HEA held on 1st July 2025

Present:

- Dr Niall Connors, Chairperson (agenda items 1-15)
- Dr Fiona Killard-Lynch (agenda items 1-15)
- Dr Rory O’Sullivan (agenda items 1-15)
- Dr Rosemary Day (agenda items 1-15)
- Ms Paula Fyans (agenda items 1-15)
- Professor Anne Scott (agenda items 3-15) via MS Teams
- Mr Dermot McCarthy (agenda items 1-15)
- Ms Nessa McEniff (agenda items 1-15) via MS Teams
- Professor Mark Rogers (agenda items 1-15)
- Mr Bryan O’Mahony (agenda 1-15)

In attendance: Professor Marie Clarke, SETL Committee Chair (agenda items 1-15)

- Dr Alan Wall (agenda items 1-15.1)
- Ms Orla Nugent (agenda items 1-14)
- Mr Trevor Purtill (agenda items 1-14)
- Ms Éilis Noonan via MS Teams (agenda items 1-14)
- Mr Tim Conlon (agenda items 1-14)
- Ms Pearl Cunningham (agenda items 1-14)
- Ms Caitríona Ryan (agenda items 1-14)
- Ms Sheena Duffy (agenda items 1-14)
- Ms Orla Christle (agenda items 1-14)
- Dr Louise Callinan (agenda items 1-14)
- Mr Ciarán McCaffrey (agenda items 1-14)
- Dr Victoria Brownlee (agenda item 7)
- Dr Áine Ní Shé (agenda item 9)
- Ms Linda Darbey (agenda items 09-12)

Opening

The Chair welcomed a new member, Mr Bryan O’Mahony, whose term as President of AMLÉ (previously USI) commenced on the same date as this meeting. Mr O’Mahony replaces Mr Chris Clifford as a Board Member. The Chair acknowledged Mr Clifford’s contribution to the Board.

Quorum

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

1. Report of meeting held 20th May

Section 12 of the May minutes will be amended as per the Board's recommendation.

Decision: The Report of the May Board meeting was approved subject to that clarification.

2. Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest were disclosed.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Future Funding Model Working Group

Clarity was sought on the position of Chair of the Future Funding Model Working Group. Following discussion, the Chair invited Dr Rory O'Sullivan to assume the role of Chair of the group. Dr O'Sullivan confirmed that he was happy to do so and was appointed Chair of the working group.

3.2 Log of actions

The Board requested that the closed actions stay on the log for future reference, rather than dropping off once closed. The Board also noted that DFHERIS had been informed of a separate submission being prepared by the Board in relation to the review of the HEA Act 2022.

4. Report of the System Funding & Oversight Committee 27th May

Dr O'Sullivan presented the Report of the Committee.

4.1 HEA Funding Framework

The Committee recommended approval of the proposed updated HEA Funding Framework. The next steps are to submit the updated HEA Funding Framework to DFHERIS to obtain Ministerial approval and provide responses to the consultation submissions.

Decision: This was approved by the Board.

4.2 Annual Governance Statements

The Committee noted the Review of the 2023/24 Annual Governance Statements. It was noted in particular that the returns for a small number of HEIs showed no evidence of ICT audits having been performed by them during this period.

4.3 Budget and Accountability Meetings

The Committee also noted the Report on the 2025 Budget and Accountability Meetings and noted their appreciation to the Executive for the work in preparing it.

Members noted the Committee's Report.

5. Report of the SETL Committee 5th June

Professor Clarke presented the Report of the Committee.

5.1 T&L Strategy

The Executive presented an update to the Committee on emerging themes such as parity of esteem between T&L and research, personal development of students in addition to their professional development and measuring quality in T&L delivery. A draft T&L Strategy will be presented at the Committee meeting in October.

5.2 Mental Health & Wellbeing

The Executive presented advice from the HEA Student and Staff Health and Wellbeing Advisory Group (SSHW AG) on the two documents recently approved for publication, the *HEA Strategy for Student and Staff Health and Wellbeing* and the *National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework Review*, and discussed next steps to progress this work.

Members noted the Committee's Report.

6. Report of the Research Committee 10th June

Dr Day presented the Report of this Committee.

6.1 Meeting with Taighde Éireann/Research Ireland

The Committee discussed plans to progress the meeting of the HEA Board with the Board of Taighde Éireann/Research Ireland in November.

The Board welcomed the Executive's confirmation of the level of cooperation and engagement it has with Taighde Éireann/Research Ireland, including consultation that has taken place between both bodies on Taighde Éireann's Corporate Plan 2025-2030.

Members noted the Committee's Report.

7. Report of the System Development Committee 11th June

Dr Connors presented the Report of this Committee.

7.1 Performance Funding 2025 Allocations

The Committee recommended approval of €5 million in support of Performance Funding projects for 2025.

Decision: The Board approved this allocation.

Members noted the Committee's Report.

8. Memo 26/25 Consultation Document: Contributing to the Delivery of the National Vision for Research

Ms Ryan presented this item. The Board was requested to review and approve the consultation document *Draft HEA Statement: Contributing to the Delivery of the National Vision for Research*.

The Board discussed the document and had the following feedback:

- Additional clarity was sought on the purpose of the document and what it was hoped would be achieved by issuing it.
- It was recommended that additional detail on the historical evolution of the role played by the HEA in research, particularly around PRTL, as well as the legislative context and additional information around the funding process should be added to the document.

- It was queried as to whether the intention was to issue this document for consultation or to issue it to outline the HEA's position.

Decision: The Executive will redraft the document taking into account the Board's feedback, discuss with the Members of the Research Committee and bring the revised document back to the next meeting of the Board in September.

9. Memo 27/25 Policy Forum - Student Progression in Higher Education Reports and Proposed Actions

Dr Ní Shé presented this item. The Board were asked to consider and approve the proposed actions to inform the programme of work for the Policy Forum from June 2025-2026.

It was recommended that language used to describe access routes be reviewed as the programme of work continues to progress. It is important not to conflate progression through QQI routes with progression through Access routes. It was acknowledged that increasing access to higher education through FET is an action of the National Access Plan.

Decision: The Board approved the proposed actions.

10. Memo 28/25 Conradh na Gaeilge Funding

Mr Conlon presented this item. The Board were asked to approve the proposal to renew funding support for the Irish-language promotion initiative, "Gníomhaí Gaeilge", coordinated by Conradh na Gaeilge and AMLÉ. The sponsorship allocation over the period 2025-2028 will total €221,315, the majority of which will fund a position to progress the work of the initiative. The HEA will continue to engage with Conradh na Gaeilge to finalise the initiative (to include "Mo thráchtas i mbeagán focal") and to monitor progress over the next three-year period.

Decision: The Board approved this proposal.

11. Memo 29/25 CSP Midterm Review

Mr Conlon presented this item. The Board was requested to approve the Report of the Midterm Review of the Corporate Strategic Plan 2023-2026.

It was suggested that further elaboration on the funding gap be provided to better articulate the consequences identified. The Executive confirmed that this is addressed and

communicated via the Budget and Accountability process with the HEIs. The report will be updated to reference the establishment of the working group on a future funding model.

It was confirmed by the Executive that further consultation with the Department at this stage on the Report of the Midterm Review of the Corporate Strategic Plan 2023-2026 is not necessary as this has already been addressed.

Decision: The Board approved the Report of the Midterm Review subject to additional detail being added as above.

12. Memo 30/25 HEA Annual Plan 2025 Q2 Report

Ms Darbey presented this item. Members considered the HEA Annual Plan 2025 Q2 Report noting recent correspondence from Minister Lawless welcoming the 2025 Plan. The Board noted the high level of delivered items and items categorised as on target in the report and acknowledged the work of the Executive in this regard.

13. Memo 31/25 Executive Report

The CEO provided an update on the ongoing engagement with TU Dublin under the HEA Act 2022 and advised the Board that he had agreed not to proceed with the S68 process provided that there is full and complete delivery of the commitments made by the University, to the satisfaction of the HEA, by the agreed date of 17 December 2025. It was noted that the HEA CEO retains the power to execute S68.

The Board noted the following from the Report:

- Under Section 4.1- Human Resources, clarity was sought as to whether appointments had been made or merely a panel formed. The Executive confirmed that appointments had been made.
- It was requested that the HR Metrics Report be updated in future to include the sections employees are assigned to. The Executive confirmed that this would be actioned.
- Additional clarity was sought on the DPO's recommendation to cease the processing of personal data via TikTok in light of the DPC's recent decision. The DPO provided the same.

It was clarified that the Board has no role in the process for external Protected Disclosures in which the HEA CEO is identified in legislation as the Prescribed Person. The HEA publishes

details of internal and external disclosures, including nil returns, received under the Protected Disclosures Act on its website on an annual basis in addition to its statutory reporting requirements.

14. Corporate Risk Register

Ms Noonan presented the Risk Register and noted the following:

- In line with suggestion from the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee, Risk 3 (Resources) has been split, with the financial aspect of that risk having been transferred to the Issues log. It was queried why both aspects had a high rating having increased from a moderate rating in December. The Executive confirmed that the administration funding allocation for 2025 was not confirmed until January 2025.
- Issue No. 1 around Pensions Expertise has been reduced from a residual rating of High to Moderate following progress on the identified control actions.

The total number of high risks is now 2/7, and the total of high issues is 1/6.

The Board noted the Corporate Risk Register.

15. Members Only Session

Next Meeting: The date of the next meeting was agreed as Tuesday 16th September

Chairperson

Date