

Higher Education Authority**Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of the HEA held on 4th November 2025**

10am, Institute of Art Design & Technology (IADT), Dun Laoghaire

Present: Prof Mark Rogers, Chairperson Designate (agenda items 1-15)

Dr Fiona Killard-Lynch (agenda items 1-15)

Dr Rosemary Day (agenda items 1-15)

Ms Paula Fyans (agenda items 1-15)

Prof Anne Scott (agenda items 1-15)

Mr Dermot McCarthy (agenda items 1-15)

Ms Nessa McEniff (agenda items 1-15)

Mr Bryan O'Mahony (agenda 1-15)

Apologies: Dr Niall Connors

Dr Rory O'Sullivan

In attendance: Dr Alan Wall, CEO (agenda items 1-15)
Ms Orla Nugent, Deputy CEO (agenda items 1-15)
Mr Trevor Purtill, Board Secretary & Head of Corporate Affairs (agenda items 1-15)
Ms Éilis Noonan, Deputy Board Secretary, Corporate Affairs (agenda items 1-15)
Mr Tim Conlon, Head of Policy & Strategic Planning (agenda items 1-15)
Dr Vivienne Patterson, Head of Statistics, Skills & Engagement (agenda items 1-15)
Ms Orla Christle, Head of System Governance (agenda item 1-15)
Ms Pearl Cunningham, Head of Finance (agenda items 1-15)
Ms Caitríona Ryan, Head of Research Policy (agenda items 1-15)
Ms Sheena Duffy, Head of International, Communications and EDI (agenda items 1-15)
Dr Louise Callinan, Head of Access Policy (agenda items 1-15)
Mr David Shiels, Statistics (agenda items 9-10) via MS Teams
Dr Valerie Harvey, Statistics (agenda items 9-10)

Quorum

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

1. Minutes of meeting held 16th Sept

The Chair confirmed that the amended July minutes were in the Supporting Folder for review.

Section 3.1 of the July Minutes will be further amended as per the Board's recommendations.

Section 10 of the September Minutes will be amended as per the Board's recommendations.

Decision: The Reports of the July and September minutes were approved subject to those amendments.

2. Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest were disclosed.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Joint Meeting with Board of Taighde Éireann/Research Ireland.

The Board of Taighde Éireann/Research Ireland has requested that this joint meeting with the Board of the HEA take place after the finalisation of its Strategic Plan. The CEOs and Chairs of both organisations will meet later this month. Cooperation and collaboration at Executive level is ongoing.

3.2 ARFC Assessment

The Chair confirmed that the appraisal of the Chair of the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee has been undertaken in line with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

3.3 Advertisement of new Board Members

The Chair confirmed that a recruitment booklet for new Board Members was published on 23rd Oct and will close on 13th November. It was confirmed that the appointment of these Members would allow for a staggered approach for the departure of Board members as their terms would extend beyond those of the existing members, ensuring continuity of Board expertise.

An external Member for the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee (ARFC) and System Funding and Oversight Committee (SFOC) is also due to be appointed by year end.

3.4 Future Funding Model Group

In the absence of Dr O'Sullivan, Chair of the Working Group, Dr Killard-Lynch provided an update on the group's activities on his behalf. The group convened in September, with the Chair providing the context for the work of the Working Group over the two-years. At the meeting, the group reviewed and accepted its TORs and discussed its work programme. The remit of the group is forward looking and will consider how funding should be distributed from 2030 onwards and is not focused on the quantum of funding. The group aims to issue an interim report in July 2026 and a final report in July 2027. The next meeting of the group is scheduled for 18th November 2025.

3.5 Log of Actions

It was confirmed that the language of the action surrounding Culture will be updated to ensure consistency with the September minute amendment above.

4. Report of Audit, Risk and Finance Committee Meeting 6th October

Dr Killard-Lynch presented the Report of the Committee.

- *4.1 C&AG 2024 Audit and Management Letter*

Representatives from the C&AG addressed the Committee and presented their Audit Completion Memorandum, noting that there were no significant matters required to be brought to the attention of the Committee.

- *4.2 Internal Audit Report- Protected Disclosures*

Representatives from the HEA's internal auditors, Forvis Mazars, addressed the Committee and presented its Internal Audit Report on Protected Disclosures. The audit found that there is both a sound internal control framework and well documented systems in place. The audit opinion is 'satisfactory, with exceptions'. The Committee recommended approval of the internal audit report on the HEA's Protected Disclosures Policies and Reporting Structures.

Decision: The Board approved the report.

- *4.3 ICT Business Plan to Transition to IT Managed Service Provider Delivery Model*

Following review of a business case study, the Committee recommended approval to transition the HEA's IT provision to a Managed Service Provider (MSP) delivery model from the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) at an initial baseline yearly cost of €261,540 (ex-VAT) for a period of up to five years.

Decision: The Board approved this recommendation.

- *4.4 Procurement Approval Thresholds*

HEA's current procurement approval limits are in place since 2020. Since then, the HEA's net operating expenses have increased, with further increases projected. The Committee recommended approval of increased procurement thresholds as set out in Memo AU 23/24.

Decision: The Board approved the increased procurement thresholds.

- *4.5 HEA Office Accommodation Project Update*

The Committee received and noted an update on the completion of the 4th floor works. The project completed on time and within a 3% budget variance.

- *4.6 HEA Transformation Programme*

The Committee received and noted an update on the programme's progress to date. Phase 1 is complete and Phase 2 has commenced. Resourcing was identified as a challenge for the programme and is being actively managed.

- *4.7 HEA Pension Administration Outsourcing*

The Committee received and noted an update on the Executive's intention to outsource the administration of its two pension schemes in 2026.

- *4.8 Procurement Report*

The Committee received and noted an update on procurement activity from January to September 2025, with no instances of non-compliant procurement over €25,000 identified.

Dr Killard-Lynch outlined that the Committee discussed the issue of sectoral risks and whether the monitoring of them resided with the ARFC. The Committee agreed that sectoral risks did not form part of the Corporate Risk Register and did not fall under the remit of the ARFC. A discussion on this matter followed and it was noted that both the System Development Committee and the System Funding and Oversight Committee monitor sectoral developments.

Members raised the following queries:

- Re 4.2 – when would the audit recommendations be implemented? The Executive confirmed that there was a commitment to implement the recommendations by mid-December.
- Re 4.3 – how would the outsourcing model impact the current ICT team? The Executive confirmed that the outsourced model would only address core ICT
- operations and overall network management. The ICT team will still be required to support other line of business applications in the HEA environment and provide onsite technical support to staff.
- Re 4.4 – it was queried whether the increase in operating expenses which necessitated the revised thresholds should be analysed. The Executive confirmed that operating expenses have increased in line with the growth of the organisation and the approval in thresholds are one of a number of controls over expenditure. Others include variance analysis and management of expenditure

to ensure it is contained within the funding envelope available. In addition, budgets are approved and management accounts are reported on via the ARFC.

The Board noted the Report of the Committee.

**5. Report of the Student Engagement, Teaching & Learning Committee Meeting
9th October**

Prof. Clarke presented this item.

- *5.1 T&L Strategy*

The Committee discussed the T&L Strategy in detail and agreed that the Executive should continue to draft a strategy document to guide the work of the HEA T&L Unit. The Committee was complimentary of the work of the Executive on the consultation process that underpins the draft strategy.

- *5.2 Professional Recognition Framework*

The Committee received an update from Dr Sharon McGreevy on her work to develop a Professional Recognition Framework for Teaching & Learning in Higher Education.

- *5.3 T&L and Health and Wellbeing Funding*

The Committee noted reports on SATLE funding and Health and Wellbeing funding. It was agreed that an update on the Ireland-Canada initiative will be presented at a meeting of the Committee in 2026.

- *5.4 Generative AI Focus Group Report*

The Committee received an update on the recently published *Generative AI in Higher Education Teaching and Learning – Sectoral Perspectives* report.

Prof Clarke noted that the second national HEA Teaching and Learning Conference will take place on 11th December.

The Board noted the Committee's Report.

6. Report of the Research Committee Meeting 14th October

Dr Day presented the Report of the Research Committee.

- *6.1 Board to Board Meeting with Taighde Éireann/Research Ireland*

The Committee noted the postponement of the meeting and agreed that the agenda will be revisited for discussion when a date has been confirmed and following feedback from the meeting of the Chairs and CEOs of both agencies.

- *6.2 System Performance Framework 2023–2028: Research and Innovation Pillar and HEI Performance Agreements*

The Committee received a briefing from the Executive on objectives and indicators identified by HEIs under the Research and Innovation (R&I) pillar of the System Performance Framework 2023-2028.

- *6.3 COVID-19 Related Costed Extensions Funding Scheme Update: Findings from 2024 Financial Reporting*

The Executive provided an update on the findings from 2024 financial reporting under the COVID-19 Related Costed Extensions funding scheme.

- *6.4 North South Research Programme Call 2: Report on the Outcome*

The Executive provided a report on the outcome of Call 2 of the North South Research Programme to the Committee.

Dr Day noted that feedback had been received from DFHERIS on the consultation document “Contributing to the Delivery of the National Vision for Research”. Dr Day confirmed that officials from DFHERIS would meet with the Committee in Q1 2026 and the document would be revisited following this meeting. Dr Killard-Lynch emphasised that the drafting process for this document was very positive for all involved and that the feedback would result in an improved outcome.

The Board noted the Committee’s Report.

7. Report of System Development Committee Meeting 15th October

Prof Scott presented this Report in the absence of the Committee Chair, Dr Connors.

- *7.1 Second Data Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education*

The Committee noted the findings and recommendations of the second Data Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education.

- *7.2 Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment Framework Review*

The Committee recommended approval of the report of an external expert group on the review of the ESVH Framework.

Decision: This was approved by the Board.

- *7.3 EDI Update*

The Committee received and noted an update from the Executive on the allocation of EDI funding.

- *7.4 Update on Performance Funding projects*

The Committee noted the update on these projects.

- *7.5 Completion of the Technological Universities Transformation Fund (TUTF)*

The Committee noted the progress made by Higher Education Institutions under the Technological Universities Transformation Fund (TUTF) and the completion of the Fund.

- *7.6 Proposed funding allocations under the Targeted Enhancement Fund- Technological Sector & Specialist Colleges*

The Committee recommended approval of the proposed project allocations under the Targeted Enhancement Fund (TEF) and the approval of the payment of project funding to institutions.

Decision: The Board approved these allocations.

- *7.7 Amendment to the Committee Terms of Reference (TORs)*

The Committee recommended approval of an amendment to Section 5.2 of the TORs concerning the required number of Board Members on the Committee.

Decision: The Board approved this amendment.

Members raised the following queries:

- Re 7.6: What will happen when the funding expires? The Executive confirmed that HEIs were asked to include sustainability plans in their proposals to recognise the fact that in the long term targeted funding will taper off.
- Re 7.6: How did proposed allocations happen and are specific outcomes assigned to each project? The Executive confirmed that (i) the HEA received proposals and subject to Board approval will provide feedback on same and associated funding allocations; (ii) HEIs will consider these allocations and feedback and provide project plans for approval by the Executive; (iii) approved project plans and their implementation will be monitored via a biannual reporting process and regular meetings.
- Re 7.7: It was queried as to the crossover between the System Development Committee and the Research Committee given there is similarity in the wording of their respective TORs. Prof Scott responded that perhaps there is some overlap and it would therefore be useful for the Chairs of both committees to meet and discuss with a view to harmonising this.

The Board noted the Committee's Report.

8. Memo 39/25 Corporate Affairs Update

The Deputy Secretary presented this item. Members were asked to approve the proposed Board and Committee Dates for 2026, and note two informational updates as follows:

- The next external Board Evaluation will take place in 2026, and a Board self-evaluation process will take place in December 2025.
- The Board will be asked in December to identify any training and development needs required to be addressed in 2026.

Decision: Members approved the proposed dates for 2026.

9. Memo 40/25 Graduate Outcomes Survey 2025 Presentation

Mr Shiels (HEA Statistics Unit) presented this item. Members were asked to approve the GOS Report for publication.

Members raised the following queries:

- Were there any particular emerging statistics that came as a surprise? The Executive responded that the data was very consistent with the previous year, with no major fluctuations.
- Clarity was sought on the term “domiciled internationally” and whether this referred to an individual’s country of origin. The Executive confirmed that it did.

Decision: Members approved the GOS Report for publication.

10. Memo 41/25 Post Graduate Research Student Survey

Dr Harvey (HEA Statistics Unit) presented this item. Members were requested to note the Post Graduate Research Student Survey Report.

Members raised the following queries and observations:

- Could this data be used to support the Research Committee and its work with the research ecosystem? The Executive outlined that one of the original drivers for bringing the Student Survey under the umbrella of the HEA was to connect it with other policy areas in the organisation, and the data being generated could certainly assist the Research Committee in identifying future themes and trends.
- Is there a comparable figure for how many graduates secure an academic position? Yes, this can be tracked from the Graduate Outcomes Survey.
- In terms of the survey methodology, is there engagement with Deans of Graduate Studies? The Executive confirmed that the Student Survey Analysis and Impact Group ensures reports reach the relevant people in the HEIs and gathers case studies on how the reports are being utilised. The Chair added that individual institutions should take the data and demonstrate that the findings are being responded to.

Members noted this item.

11. Memo 42/25 HEA Annual Plan 2025 Q3 Report

The Head of Policy & Strategic Planning presented this item. The Board noted updates to the deliverables set out in the Annual Plan in Q3.

12. Memo 43/25 Climate Action Reporting

The Head of Corporate Affairs presented this Memo. Members noted updates made to the Climate Action Roadmap. The HEA has made substantial progress in decarbonising its operations, modernising its building infrastructure, and fostering a culture of sustainability.

Members noted specifically the reductions in thermal energy that have been achieved. Members also queried whether there were any incentives for staff to use more eco-friendly modes of transport, and the Executive confirmed that the HEA Green Team can look at this in more detail.

Members noted this Memo.

13. Corporate Risk Register

The Deputy Secretary presented the Risk Register and noted that no substantial changes were made since the last review. She also noted that the formal risk review process will commence in the coming weeks and will be reported to the December meeting of the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee.

The Board noted the Corporate Risk Register.

14. Memo 44/25 Executive Report

The CEO provided an update on:

- the ongoing engagement with TU Dublin under the HEA Act 2022,
- the review of the university borrowings being undertaken by NewERA,
- the Minister's letter to Solas that was copied to HEA CEO in respect of apprenticeships
- It was queried whether work was ongoing on a revised Customer Service Charter. The Deputy Secretary confirmed this work has almost concluded and a revised Customer Service Charter and Action Plan would be available shortly.

Members noted the Executive Report.

15. AOB

The Chair thanked David Smith, President of IADT, and his colleagues for facilitating the hosting of the HEA Board meeting.

15. Members Only Session

Next Meeting: The date of the next meeting was agreed as Tuesday 2nd December.

Chairperson

Date